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‘Representing Performance: Documentary Film, Performance Theory and the *Real*’

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Abstract: This thesis explores the points of intersection between documentary theory and performance theory. Documentary discourse – both practice and theory – concerns itself with the search for an origin; an object in the real world with which the filmmaking apparatus interacts. The object is the nucleus of the documentary text. The fact that the object is taken from the historical world provides the text and its argument with immediacy and relevance. Writing on documentary focuses on the relationship forged between this object and the documentary text. The cynosure of documentary theory is an examination of the practices and processes deployed by the filmmaker in the representation of reality. Where I perceive a gap in documentary theory is in the lack of analysis given to what constitutes reality itself; in particular, the people represented by a documentary. This thesis will argue that human beings can not be regarded as simple, stable objects which yield themselves for the representational practices of the filmmaker. The anthropological, psychological and sociological theories of human behaviour and conduct disseminated by Richard Schechner, Judith Butler and Erving Goffman demonstrate that the individual subject is itself a discursive practice. When a documentary camera represents a human being, it is representing a performance; a consciously and unconsciously maintained ‘act’ composed of gestures, attitudes and characteristics which the subject did not author itself. This thesis will examine four modes of performance in documentary. Performativity illustrates that a subject’s fundamental identity is citational; the origin of any documentary subject’s performance does not reside within that subject, but is rather dislocated and relocated onto the cultural field within which its identity is formed. The presentation of self demonstrates the ways in which a documentary subject can wilfully command and control the manner in which it presents itself, and thus control the manner in which it is represented. Interaction is a dialectical performance which occurs between filmmaker and subject. This is a means by which the filmmaker may use performative strategies of his/her own in order to challenge or pressure the performance of the subject. In documentary reenactments, the historical figure whom the documentary represents is reembodied in the actor who plays him/her. Issues surrounding surrogacy, fantasy and identification come to the fore in this mode of performance. This thesis will explore the impact these modes of performance have upon the documentary quest to represent reality.

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Introduction

In the eighty years since John Grierson's invocation of the 'creative treatment of actuality' (Forsyth Hardy, 1979:11), documentary filmmakers and theorists have sought to unravel and assess the nature of documentary's putative indexical bond to the historical world (cf. Brian Winston, 1995:pp.11-16; John Corner, 1996:pp.11-16). Whereas fiction deals with *a* world - a metaphorical world derived from the imagination of the filmmaker - documentary deals with *the* world - the shared world of experience (Bill Nichols, 1991:109). The object represented in a documentary is 'taken' from the real world. It is an object which we could see, touch or interact with ourselves. This object is the nucleus of every documentary representation. It is from this nucleus that all arguments, inflections, creativity and representational issues emanate. Discussions on the 'creative treatment of actuality' centre on the 'creative' part of the equation; that is, on the methods undertaken by the documentary filmmaker to construct an argument out of actuality (cf. Nichols; Corner; Winston). In these discussions, 'actuality' is pictured as a stable, uniform 'thing', with which the documentary apparatus interacts. It will be the purpose of this thesis to explore the 'actuality' part of the equation. I wish to explore how Robert Ezra Park's assertion that 'everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role' (1950:249) interacts with the bond between the documentary text and the object it represents.

The people who appear in a documentary are part of the actuality which it represents. However, a human being is not a static object which submits him/herself to the representational practices of the documentary apparatus. A human being is him/herself a discursive practice. People are products of complex social networks and processes which shape the ways in which they conduct themselves in their daily lives. People also deliberately seek to control the manner in which they present themselves to others. They are capricious and unpredictable creatures who behave differently at different times and in different circumstances. In this thesis, I will explore the ways in which anthropological, psychological and sociological theories of human behaviour and conduct complicate the bond between the documentary image and the historical world. When an individual is said to be

‘putting on a performance’, it is generally assumed that the individual is not being genuine; that is, s/he is constructing a façade which does not portray his/her real feelings and emotions. ‘Putting on a performance’, therefore, would appear to be anathema to documentary’s quest to represent the real. However, performance pervades every aspect of our social lives and interactions. Richard Schechner claims that ‘[p]erformance must be construed as a ‘broad spectrum’ or ‘continuum’ of human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theater, dance, music) and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media, and the internet’ (2002:2). This quandary is the inspiration for my thesis.

In researching this project, I wanted to answer the following questions: What does a documentary represent when it represents a human being? Does performance attenuate, or abrogate documentary’s truth claim? How do documentary filmmakers use performance in their arguments about the world? Do they ignore performance, or do they exploit it?

There are four elements of documentary performance which I wish to examine in detail: 1) Performativity (in reference to *The N-Word* (Todd Williams, 2004) and *Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs, 1989)). 2) The presentation of self (*Marjoe* (Howard Smith and Sarah Kernochan, 1972) and *Meet Marlon Brando* (Albert and David Maysles, 1965)). 3) Interaction (*When Louis Met... Chris Eubank* (BBC, 2002), *Religulous* (Larry Charles, 2008) and *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (Nathan Frankowski, 2008)). 4) Performance in documentary reenactments (*The Road to Guantanamo* (Michael Winterbottom and Matt Whitecross, 2006) and *United 93* (Paul Greengrass, 2006)). I have proposed these four modes of performance as I consider them to cover the full ambit of performance scenarios that the spectator may encounter in documentary filmmaking. Performativity and the presentation of self are an intrinsic element of every performance delivered by a documentary subject. Every individual represented in a documentary activates the tropes contained within these modes of performance. For this reason, it is essential to incorporate these theories of performance into documentary discourse. Interactive and reenactment performances appear only in certain documentary texts, but are nevertheless a crucial element of documentary discourse. I have selected texts which

foreground the four modes of performance which I wish to isolate, and which rely heavily upon the meanings generated by a particular mode of performance for their arguments about the historical world and for their claims to authenticity. My touchstone is the assumption that documentary retains a truth claim through its perceptual bond to the real world and that this truth claim is activated in each of the documentaries I examine, in specific ways and at specific moments. Given the relative lack of analysis in this area, I will analyse these performances in two ways: to illustrate how the relevant mode of performance operates in documentary discourse, and to assess the pressure it puts on the particular truth claims of the texts I study. This has guided my choice of films. I have excluded historical and cultural analysis because I wish to illustrate a general theory which I consider to have been overlooked by writing on documentary.

I will work from the proposition that, even in our ‘post-documentary culture’ (Corner, 2002), documentary film preserves a cachet through its existential link to the historical world. Some texts activate this bond as evidence for their arguments. For example, *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006) relies on its direct relationship to real events and phenomena for its polemical weight. The image is evidential, providing authority to the scientific claims made by the text. Nature documentaries such as *Planet Earth* (BBC, 2006) show us how the real world functions. History documentaries such as *A History of Britain by Simon Schama* (BBC, 2000-2002) provide us with insight into our shared past. Political documentaries such as *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers* (Judith Ehrlich and Rick Goldstein, 2009) reveal important information about prominent figures, whose actions had direct consequences on countless lives. Crime documentaries such as *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (Christine Choy and Renee Tajima-Pena, 1987) investigate and reveal facts about real murders. No matter how this existential bond is framed (from the Zapruder film to *Driving School*, BBC, 1997), it provides the text with resonance and/or relevance. I will explore the effects of performance on this cachet.

The bond between image and reality has been placed under considerable strain by the proliferation of reality television and docusoaps, which trade on the spontaneity and immediacy of the nonfiction image, but which take considerable licence with their ‘creative treatment’. In his essay

‘What Can We Say About Documentary’, Corner assesses the kinds of truth claims which different texts make within the eclectic landscape of contemporary documentary filmmaking (2000). Corner distinguishes between heavily expressive (‘thick’) texts, in which the truth claim may be weak, and less expressive (‘thin’) texts, which seek to activate strong truth claims in order to present a plausible and pressing argument (683). These may perhaps be best viewed as opposite ends of a continuum, along which a documentary may (and invariably does) move in the course of a single text. For example, Errol Morris’ inclusion of David Harris’ apparent confession in *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) is decidedly thin; an (apparently) unmediated voice recording laid over the image of a playing Dictaphone. The now legendary flying chocolate malt, however, is manifestly thick. At certain points, Morris relies on the truth claim of documentary discourse in order to provide damning information, while at other points he sacrifices the claim to be dramatic and affective.

Corner’s contradistinction between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ also presumes an ethical transparency on the part of the filmmaker. It is quite possible for a filmmaker to present a thick text as thin, disguising heavy distortions to the source material in order to make his/her argument convincing. Michael Moore’s montage of pre-invasion Iraq in *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), for instance, risibly depicts the country as tranquil and idyllic in order to shame the wanton aggression of the Bush administration. This veiled thickness provoked the ire of several critics, who accused Moore of patent dishonesty (Christopher Hitchens, 2004; Mark Kermode, 2004). Where a documentary masks its thickness, it enters an ethical quandary. However, a documentary can not speak for the thinness or thickness of the performance of its subjects. While we may be able to identify and quantify the inflections placed upon reality by the filmmaker, it is quite impossible to verify the extent to which the subject is devising his/her performance. In *The Thin Blue Line*, both David Harris and Randall Adams present themselves as innocent of the policeman’s murder, but at least one of them is clearly dissembling. However, we can not see into their heads in order to ascertain their true motivations or identify their affectations. We may *surmise* that elements of the subject’s performance are not genuine indications of their real feelings and motivations. For example, as we receive more and more revelations, we may conclude that Harris is not telling the truth in his testimony (particularly on second viewing, after hearing his

apparent confession), but we can only guess at this. A documentary camera can not make a reliable or transparent truth claim based on the performance of its subject.

The subjects in a documentary are almost always the most meaningful part of the representation. They are central to the text's argument, they entertain or infuriate us, they provide opportunity for sympathy, empathy or identification. Subjects in documentaries often have a presumed or inherent authority. In *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston, 1990), Pepper LaBeija and the other house leaders are our guides to the rules and relationships of the drag scene. They describe its operations in a pedagogic manner. In *Stranded* (Gonzalo Arijon, 2009), the survivors of the 1974 crash of Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571 are our only source of evidence for the trauma and horror of the experience. It is their voices, rather than the filmmaker's, which tell the story. Similarly, in *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), it is left to the testimony of Holocaust survivors to represent the horror of the camps. In all of these cases, the documentary filmmaker does not intervene to cast doubt upon the veracity and accuracy of these accounts, and s/he does not question the authenticity of the plangent performances of the subjects. In fact, these texts rely on the performances of the subjects for their emotional impact.

Performance, as a category, is the subject of as much discussion and dispute as documentary (Schechner, 1985; 2002; Marvin Carlson, 1996). Any attempt to define performance must begin by distinguishing between a performance and a non-performance. Erving Goffman defines a performance as 'that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense' (1986:124). What may constitute a 'stage performer' is open to interpretation. In his earlier work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman argues that in fact all social interaction is a type of theatre, in which every individual could be viewed as a stage performer presenting him/herself to an audience (1959). Marvin Carlson offers another possible definition of performance; 'a certain distance between 'self' and behaviour, analogous to that between an actor and the role the actor plays in stage' (1996:4). Performance here is characterised by a degree of conscious ostensiveness. Carlson argues that 'we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think about them, this involves a consciousness that gives

them the quality of performance' (4). Similarly, Schechner claims that the 'more self-conscious a person is, the more one constructs behaviour for those watching and/or listening, the more such behaviour is 'performing'' (2002:146). This proposes a continuum of performing. At one extreme would be the true or genuine self, and at the other extreme is completely manufactured behaviour; that is, the more one consciously modifies one's behaviour, the further one moves from the real self.

I would argue that the presence of a documentary camera intrinsically leads every subject to modify his/her behaviour. This performance is being permanently recorded and relayed to a vast and discriminating audience. A documentary encounter is an example of what Goffman calls a 'focused interaction', in which our awareness of our conduct elevates; that is, we perform more self-consciously (1966:7). When confronted by a documentary camera, the average subject will seek, as much as possible, to present a particular impression of him/herself. As Schechner notes, the 'presence of the fieldworker is an invitation to playacting' (1985:107). In documentary, the subject is always performing for the camera (with the exception of hidden cameras).

Theories of performativity argue that performance goes far deeper than conscious ostensiveness. Drawing upon Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement, '[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (1993:281), Judith Butler claims that our fundamental gender identity can be construed as a performance. Butler argues, '[c]onsider gender [...] as a *corporeal style*, an 'act', as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where '*performative*' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning' (1999:178). Gender 'ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*' (179). Butler concentrates on gender as a performance, but this theory illustrates the way in which we enact all of our roles in life. What appears to be our natural, or real, state and identity, is in fact an act, composed of performative strategies and paradigms which only *appear* to be natural. A documentary camera does not capture the unique and discrete inner core of its subject, because there is not such a stable core. Rather, every individual's most basic identity is a discursive construction; a performance.

Writing on documentary occasionally offers brief glimpses of the relationship of performance to documentary filmmaking. Nichols fleetingly acknowledges the subject's presentation of self, which he terms a 'virtual performance' (122). Virtual performance 'presents the logic of actual performance without signs of conscious awareness that this presentation is an act' (122). By 'actual performance', Nichols means theatrical performance, which he distinguishes outright from the everyday presentation of self. I would argue, drawing upon Schechner and Carlson, that there is no distinction between virtual and actual performance, merely degrees of conscious and ostensive performing. Nichols does not consider this detail, nor does he acknowledge a distinction in the everyday presentation of self and the presentation of self in a documentary. Like most documentary theorists, Nichols analyses the 'voice' of the filmmaker in detail. The presentation of self, however, is the subject's voice. I would argue that the subject's voice plays a crucial role in the representation made by the documentary text. Corner, meanwhile, makes a couple of teasing references to 'modified behaviour' in his discussion of the docusoap *The Family* (BBC, 1974) (1996:pp.46-48), but does not assess its source or its impact on documentary's truth claim. Corner, somewhat glibly, notes that it is possible that 'viewers quickly learn to recognise modified behaviour and to 'allow' for it variously in their interpretations of persons and actions' (47). This assumes a remarkable level of insight on the part of the spectator into the interior motivations of another individual. It also fails to explain what 'allowing for it' may entail and what effect this may have on the text's bond to reality.

In *New Documentary*, Stella Bruzzi explores the phenomenon of performance in documentary in greater detail (2006). Bruzzi sees performance as a distancing device; a reflexive barrier between the text and reality, which foregrounds the inherent contingency of documentary's truth claim. Bruzzi argues that the 'performative element could be seen to undermine the conventional documentary pursuit of representing the real because the elements of performance, dramatization and acting for the camera are intrusive and alienating factors' (187). In common with Nichols and Corner (though in more depth), Bruzzi analyses performance mainly in terms of intentionally modified behaviour. Bruzzi argues that documentary spectators tend to judge the authenticity of performance on its degree of 'naturalness'. The 'benefit to the photogenic or 'cinegenic' subject is that he or she becomes accessible to the spectator [...] through an ability to turn in a non-performance' (159). What Bruzzi

seems to mean by ‘non-performance’ is that the subject is not acting up for the camera; s/he is being him/herself. This implies a stable origin, an authentic self, which the camera may pick up in the right circumstances. It will be the guiding principle of this thesis that there is no such origin. Individuals are always performing, whether there is a camera present or not.

In documentary representation, the historical world functions as an origin. It is from this presumed origin that questions of the filmmaker’s creativity are extrapolated. However, Schechner argues that the main characteristic of performance is ‘restored behavior’ (1985:35). All performance is citation of a previous act or acts. The origin of a performance is always deferred. Performance means, ‘never for the first time. It means: for the second to the nth time. Performance is ‘twice-behaved behavior’ (36). In the workshop/rehearsal process of theatre, performers encode ‘strips of behavior’ (35). These are acts and gestures which are stored and re-used in the performance proper. Everyday performances are also composed of strips of behaviour. We use a particular facial expression to denote anger, another expression to denote joy. We sit upright in a job interview to signify alertness, but recline in a therapist’s office to signify complaisance. These gestures do not have innate meaning. Rather, we use them like any language to express feelings and attitudes. We do not encode strips of behaviour ourselves. They are already written; we merely borrow them. As Schechner argues, the ‘units of behaviour that comprise ‘me’ were not invented by ‘me’”(2002:28). The elements which compose the performance which a documentary subject delivers do not originate with that subject. Rather, s/he *cites*, both consciously and unconsciously, performative strategies and acts from multifarious sources. The documentary camera has no access to these sources. Its origin is the subject on-screen, but the meanings embodied within that subject’s performance are drawn from other sources.

Every aspect of a documentary subject’s on-screen performance contributes to - is in fact *sine qua non* to - the overall meaning generated by the performance. We infer meanings from the subject’s posture, gestures, vocal inflections and turns of phrase. These are ‘strips of behaviour’, deployed both consciously and unconsciously by the subject in presenting him/herself. These collate into a gestalt, and it is from this that we form an impression of the subject and his/her function to the documentary.

For example, one of the interviewees in *When the Levees Broke* (Spike Lee, 2007) is the sociologist Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, who critiques the Bush administration's response to Hurricane Katrina. Lee uses Dyson's testimony in order to advance the argument of the film. Dyson's performance makes him appear a convincing and reliable commentator. Dyson is an unusually fluent and eloquent speaker. His voice is stentorian. He provides complex and insightful analysis, yet never pauses to collect his thoughts or correct himself. He frowns as he forms his sentences and occasionally closes his eyes, portraying an appearance of intense concentration. He iterates his points with the aid of decisive hand gestures. He wears a suit and tie. Voice and body appear to work together to produce the uniform impression that Dyson is a perspicacious commentator. However, Dyson's performance conveys perspicacity only by citing previous performances of perspicacity. Dyson did not author the meanings of these gestures himself. Their origin precedes his performance. We decode his acts and gestures as perspicacious because they reiterate previous performances of perspicacity. He uses the strips of behaviour necessary to communicate this impression. Fluent speech is not an innate denotation of intelligence; it only denotes intelligence by echoing previous performances which have been classified as intelligent.

In spite of this, it is to the discrete performance of Dyson, the individual documentary subject, which we respond. We make inferences and draw conclusions about the subject matter of the documentary based on Dyson's physical performance. It is on this performance which Spike Lee's argument, his claim to represent reality, is based. The documentary camera can not see the sources of the discourses encoded into Dyson's performance and it can not see his internal process of selecting which impressions to foster, and why. This is what I wish to dissect in this thesis. I will investigate what a documentary represents when it represents a human being, and the representational issues this produces.

Essential to the meanings generated by Dyson's performance in *When the Levees Broke* is the manner in which it is framed. Schechner, Goffman, et al. examine performance in everyday social process. Documentary performance, however, is mediated. Documentary performance is live at the moment of filming. It is (theoretically) unrehearsed and spontaneous (it is from this fact that the text

derives its gravitas and immediacy). However, the performance is not live at the moment of viewing. Like every object in the representation, the performance of a subject must still undergo creative treatment. *Mise-en-scène* plays a key role in dictating the manner in which the audience decodes a performance. In *When the Levees Broke*, many residents of New Orleans are interviewed on the sites of their wrecked homes. This provides context to their outrage and pain. In contrast, Dyson is filmed in a studio, which gives him a critical distance from the events he disseminates. This staging informs us that Dyson's contribution will be intellectual rather than emotive. The framing of the image tends to cut out parts of the performer's body and, by extension, part of the performance. In extreme close-up, we may obtain great detail of the subject's facial features, but this comes at the expense of hand gestures and posture. New Orleans residents are frequently shot at a range which allows us to see their entire bodies. The camera can pick up their gesticulations. Dyson, meanwhile, is shot entirely in close-up. This instructs us that his words are more significant than his gestures.

Editing is also a crucial element of the way in which a performance is framed. The documentary filmmaker will usually accrue more footage than s/he can include in the final cut of the film. The filmmaker must therefore select which segment of the total performance is most relevant to the argument of the text. The point at which the performance is cut affects the meanings it generates. In one sequence in *When the Levees Broke*, Dyson makes a scathing obloquy on Condoleezza Rice. After he finishes his argument, the frame pauses for a beat, with Dyson nodding his head, and his features composed into an expression of confidence. Dyson appears to have made his point in precisely the manner he wished, and the documentary pauses to allow it to sink in. Dyson's account is framed as plausible and telling. In contrast, later in the film, Lee includes footage of George Bush's infamous commendation of FEMA director Michael Brown, which he frames in a manner designed to make Bush appear preposterous. When Bush turns to Brown and utters 'Brownie, you're doing a heckuva job', Lee immediately replays the segment and then replays it again, the frame zooming in further and further on the faces of Bush and Brown each time. Lee is driving home the absurdity of the statement. This is followed by another interviewee ridiculing Bush's declaration. In contrast to his treatment of Dyson, Lee applies the documentary apparatus to challenge and discredit the

performance of Bush. In my textual analyses throughout this thesis, I will take into account this tension between performance and framing.

Performance is an immanent part of our everyday lives. It is therefore an intrinsic part of the world which a documentary represents. Of the plethora of writing on documentary, only rarely is performance addressed. I argue that performance can not be neglected or understated as an element of ‘actuality’. Documentary theory and practice attempts to find meanings in the interaction between reality and representation. In this thesis, I will attempt to factor in the meanings generated, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the subjects whom a documentary represents.

In chapter one, I will utilise Judith Butler’s theory of performativity to demonstrate that a documentary subject’s fundamental identity is in fact a performance (1995; 1999). Where Butler examines performativity in relation to gender, I will apply it to the construction of black racial identity in US society. Like gender, race is a social construct in which difference has been registered – falsely - through visual difference. There are two arms to Butler’s theory: the first is that our identity is not self-generated; the second is that cultural fields impose a normative, or ‘correct’ way of behaving, and punish transgressions or aberrations. This is the reason why discrete individuals unconsciously adopt relatively isomorphic gender and racial identities. Butler terms this an ‘exclusionary matrix’ (1995:3); the ‘subject is reconstituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside’ (3). The exclusionary matrix dictates which strips of behaviour are appropriate for the subject to cite. Without such a matrix, every individual would perform their gender and race differently.

There are two elements of performativity which I will consider in relation to documentary representation. I will begin by examining performative speech acts; that is, speech acts which transform social reality. Performatives demonstrate that what we apprehend as reality is itself contingent and subject to change, presenting a fundamental challenge to the mission to ‘represent reality’. I will focus on the term ‘nigger’ as a performative speech act, which *a priori* interpellates a dark-skinned individual into discourse as inferior to a lighter-skinned individual. Todd Williams’ *The N-Word* (2004) explores the contemporary reformulation of this term by the black community. I will

investigate the representational problems created by speech acts in general and the specific problems encountered by *The N-Word* in its presentation of this discussion. I will then examine performativity as the means through which our identity is enacted and defined through the citation of strips of behaviour. I will also examine the exclusionary matrix which organises this process. I will discuss this in reference to Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied* (1989). *Tongues Untied* sets out to establish a uniform visible and audible gay black community, into which Riggs intentionally sets out to interpellate the gay black spectator (Chuck Kleinhans and Julia Lesage, 1991:20). Riggs' documentary can be viewed as providing a batch of strips of behaviour, attitudes and characteristics for the gay black spectator to adopt. As such, *Tongues Untied* demonstrates that an individual's identity is constructed by citing characteristics and acts from a cultural field. However, I will argue that, in so doing, Riggs imposes a normative, exclusionary precept of gay black identity onto his audience.

In chapter two, I will apply Erving Goffman's theory of self-presentation, in order to explore the ways in which a documentary subject can take control of the manner in which s/he is represented (1959). In so doing, the subject bends the documentary representation to his/her will. I will examine this theory in reference to *Marjoe* (Howard Smith and Sarah Kernochan, 1972) and *Meet Marlon Brando* (Albert and David Maysles, 1965). These documentaries exhibit highly stylized presentations of self. These performances exhibit the skills a documentary subject can use to mislead or deflect the audience. *Marjoe* represents Marjoe Gortner, a fraudulent Pentecostal preacher who shows off the performative tricks he employs to fool his congregation. This performance demonstrates the extent to which an audience can be taken in by an entirely fabricated performance. In *Meet Marlon Brando*, Brando delivers a highly inflected, manifestly manufactured performance which prevents access to his 'real' self.

In chapter three, I examine social interaction as a category of performance in documentary. In *Meet Marlon Brando* and *Marjoe*, Brando and Gortner are able to present themselves to their respective audiences without challenge. In order to place their subject's presentation of self under scrutiny, some documentary filmmakers intervene in the representation. The filmmaker's own performance puts pressure on the subject's presentation of self. This forces the subject to be reactive

as well as proactive. Interactive performances are dialectical, where the performance of each subject influences the performance of the other subject. In *When Louis Met...Chris Eubank* (BBC, 2002), Louis Theroux uses a number of performative strategies in order to wrongfoot Eubank, to catch him off-guard and place him in a situation for which he does not have an ideal performance prepared. Theroux's method (theoretically) prevents Eubank from presenting himself in a manner of his own design. I will then analyse *Religulous* (Larry Charles, 2008) and *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (Nathan Frankowski, 2008), in which the presenters use the force of their own personality in order to manipulate their subjects into producing a particular performance which suits the goals of the filmmaker.

In the final chapter, I discuss the challenges performance in documentary reenactments pose to authenticity. Reenactments present a distinct representational quandary in that they sever the indexical bond of image to historical world. Nonetheless, a perceptual bond remains. Reenactments, like all documentary, wish to speak to us on the basis of their relationship to the real world (in this case a much more compromised and complex relationship). I will examine the issues raised when the performance of a fictive actor stands in for the actions of a real person. I have selected two films which reenact events from 9/11 the subsequent 'War on Terror', *United 93* (Paul Greengrass, 2008) and *The Road to Guantanamo* (Michael Winterbottom, 2008). In a reenactment, the historical figure upon whom the documentary is based is completely absent from the representation. His or her place is taken by the body and performance of an actor.

1. Performativity

In this chapter, I will apply Judith Butler's theory of performativity to documentary representation (1995; 1999). Butler argues that our identities are not self-generated, but are rather *cited*. A documentary, therefore, does not represent a cohesive and discrete self; it represents a constellation of discourses which have coalesced into a single body. The subject's identity is defined through the unconscious citation and reiteration of characteristics and acts. It is this reiteration which the documentary represents. Butler argues that

acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (1999:173).

Our most basic and fundamental identities are composed of restored behaviour. The documentary subject, therefore, is not the origin of his/her performance. In documentary, the representation usually begins and ends with the individual subject. Performativity is rarely acknowledged as a trope in documentary representation. There are two elements of performativity which I wish to examine: the representational issues which performative speech acts present to documentary; and the operations of social discourses in commanding and conducting the performance of a documentary subject. I will argue this in relation to two texts: *The N-Word* (Todd Williams, 2004) and *Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs, 1989). These documentaries are unusual in that they explicitly interrogate elements of performativity. I will assess how they do this, and the problems they encounter.

Where Butler examines the construction of gender identity, I wish to apply this theory to the performance and representation of race in documentary filmmaking, focusing my analysis on the

black community of the United States. As with gender, there is no biological origin for racial identity and difference. Racial identity, like gender, is an 'act' regulated by social discourses; 'racial formation is a process of historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized' (Michael Omi and Harvard Winant, 1994:56). Racial difference is registered through the distinct cultural fields which people of different races tend to occupy (in the US, this cleavage is an enduring remnant of slavery and segregation). Richard Dyer notes that, 'to say that one is interested in race has come to mean that one is interested in any racial imagery than that of white people' (1997:1). I have selected 'blackness' as a social construction in order to demonstrate the functions of the 'exclusionary matrix' (Butler, 1995:3), which defines 'whiteness' as normative and invisible (Dyer), and 'blackness' as alterative and abjected (bell hooks, 1990; 1995; Cornel West, 1994; Nikhil Pal Singh, 2002). This matrix is the cultural field from which an individual cites his/her identity. The exclusionary matrix operates to define a subject's identity. This matrix is not an institution, or any agent which intentionally imposes an identity on a subject (Michel Foucault, 1998:pp.92-93). Rather, social construction is a 'process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter' (Butler, 1995:9).

In discussing race, I am merely isolating one of the many axes of orientation along which our identity construction is aligned. However, central to my discussion will be the argument that racial performative communities are not discrete and exclusive. 'Blackness' is not constructed in isolation from 'whiteness'. These cultural fields overlap and intermingle, both with one another and with many other cultural fields. It is this in collision which an individual identity is constructed and it is from all of these sources that a documentary subject cites his/her identity.

I will first examine performative utterances which have the (potential) power to injure, in reference to *The N-Word*. The term 'nigger' was initially used as a derogatory speech act. However, its appropriation by the black community, and transmission to black and white film and music audiences in America and beyond, has impugned its status as an injurious word. This recontextualisation of the term problematizes the conventions which govern its felicity as a performative (J.L. Austin, 1962:pp.14-16). Some now regard the term as benign, while others continue to use its power to

malign. The word is used in some contexts as a term of fraternity, but it is still deployed by some with the explicit intent to derogate. For example, Alexandra Pelosi's *Right America: Feeling Wronged* (HBO, 2009) unmask a vein of explicitly racist objections to Barack Obama's candidacy for President. When one Mississippi man succinctly informs Pelosi of his electoral strategy – 'I ain't voting for no nigger' - this would certainly appear to constitute an injurious speech act.

The N-Word is composed of a string of interviews, featuring prominent black academics and cultural figures, along with a series of *vox populi* interviews, to gain their perspective on whether it is now acceptable to use the term, and in what circumstances. *The N-Word* is one of those documentaries which, Bill Nichols argues, 'leave us with little choice but to accept the perspective, and commentary, of their interviewees (see-it-this-way)' (1991:pp.126-127). Williams does not intervene in the film, shifting rhetorical authority to his subjects. However, his partiality is displayed in his choice of subjects, and in the perspective of the discussions. I will argue that *The N-Word* fails to adequately acknowledge the conventions which make the term 'nigger' an injurious performative. The documentary focuses on the experiences and opinions of black individuals uttering the term to black individuals, but the term 'nigger' was established as a performative by its utterance by a white individual to a black individual. This is missing from *The N-Word's* analysis, and it illustrates just one of the complications speech acts present to the documentary project to represent the real.

I will then go on to examine the construction of racial identity, as explored by Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied* (1989). Originally aired on public television throughout the US, *Tongues Untied* is composed of a series of vignettes which depict the tribulations encountered by gay black men in confrontation with white heterosexual normalcy. *Tongues Untied* charts the discrimination, derogation and 'hurt' experienced by gay black men in US society, and attempts to assert gay black identity as a legitimate and vital part of that society. Riggs describes *Tongues Untied* as an 'affirmation of the feelings and experiences of black gay men, made for them by a black gay man, or actually by black gay men because the piece has a number of voices' (Chuck Kleinhaus and Julia Lesage, 1991:19). Riggs adds, 'I am a black gay man. I made the work from that perspective. There is no debate about whether my life is right or wrong. It is right – period! ... My life is full of value and so is the life of

my community' (B.J. Bullert, 1997:91). This view was not shared by several programmers and politicians, whose response to the documentary provided a quintessential demonstration of the ways in which social and institutional matrices exclude certain identities. In Georgia, state politicians threatened to cut all funding to the public television broadcaster if they aired *Tongues Untied* (Bullert:98), and leading Republican strategist Pat Buchanan dubbed it 'pornographic art' (Sheila Petty, 1998:416), mirroring the evangelist Pat Robertson's denunciation of Robert Mapplethorpe's work (as shown in *The Power of Nightmares: The Phantom Victory* (Adam Curtis, 2004)).

The subjects in *Tongues Untied* appear as representative of gay black men and of gay black experience. Each subject is a reification of 'blackness'. Unusually, this documentary demonstrates that individual identity is acquired from a cultural field. Riggs does not isolate his subjects from their performative community - positing them as discrete and autonomous individuals - but rather places them squarely within the relations and networks of their cultural field. This is how all of our identities – racial, sexual, gender – are situated and formed, but most documentaries do not acknowledge this fact. *Tongues Untied* also illustrates the tensions which arise when an individual's identity is in conflict with the exclusionary matrix of his environment. As Butler argues, certain identities are 'compulsory' (1999:177). *Tongues Untied* attempts to challenge this matrix by establishing a normative gay black identity. In doing so, however, I will argue that *Tongues Untied* creates its own exclusionary matrix. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, in repudiating normative identity (in the form of a particular paradigm of heterosexual whiteness), *Tongues Untied* establishes another normative identity (in the form of a particular paradigm of homosexual blackness). *Tongues Untied* poses a cohesive and uniform black identity and also posits black identity as innately discrete to white identity. I argue that this approach neglects key elements of the operations of identity formation. The cultural fields which operate to form our identity do not exist in isolation. They are interreliant and dialectical. Riggs subjects are presented as solely a part of the gay black community. I argue that the identity of a gay black subject is in fact cited from more numerous sources.

Before embarking upon my case studies, it may be helpful to outline the tenets of performativity on which I will base my discussion. The concept of performativity originates with J.L.

Austin's postulation of explicit performative speech acts; that is, statements, where 'the issuing of an utterance is the performing of an action' (1962:6). The reality represented by a documentary can change through the simple utterance of a word or phrase in the correct circumstances. We use performative speech acts to create social reality: to determine guilt in a courtroom; to create a marriage contract. Social reality is distinct to the ontological reality upon which it is based (John Searle, 1995). This contradistinction is unacknowledged in the documentary quest to 'represent reality'. This term assumes a given, stable reality, which tenders itself for the representational practices of the documentary filmmaker. However, social reality is a discursive construct and is in constant flux. For example, in *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), at the time of filming, Randall Adams had been found guilty of Officer Wood's murder. However, Adams' conviction was overturned in 1989. The reality represented by the documentary has completely changed. To an audience watching in 1988, *The Thin Blue Line* represents a murderer (when the camera is on Adams). To a contemporary audience, the documentary does not represent a murderer (when the camera is on Adams). The ontological reality points to David Harris being the individual responsible for Officer Wood's death, but we rely upon a juridicially-mandated social reality to determine guilt. Social reality thus presents a challenge to representation because it is contingent, unstable and subject to change (through the use of performative speech acts).

Racist speech is considered a performative speech act in that, in its utterance, it derogates and subordinates the individual to whom it is directed. Butler argues that 'hate speech is understood not only to communicate an offensive idea or set of ideas but also to enact the very message it communicates: the very communication is at once a form of conduct' (1997:72). The injurious word is interpellative. It brings the individual into discourse in an abjected or inferior role to the speaker. Hate speech 'constitutes the subject through the injury it causes' (24). Butler argues that there is no subject prior to our interpellation into social discourse; there 'is no 'I' who stands *behind* discourse and executes its volition or will *through* discourse. On the contrary, the 'I' only comes into being through being called, named, interpellated [...] and this discursive constitution takes place prior to the 'I' (1995:225). Whatever else the individual is – female, male, working class, upper class, young, old – the injurious, racist word brings him/her into a racial discourse. This is how s/he is subsequently

defined. Hate speech is thus performative in that it creates and defines the individual's status as a subject.

The power to transform social reality does not reside solely with the individual who utters a speech act. Performatives accrue their power to transform through a 'historicity of force' (Butler, 1997:51). Jacques Derrida asks, '[c]ould a performative statement succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'coded' or iterable statement, in other words if the expression I use to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable in a way as 'citation'?' (2007:129). Every utterance cites a previous utterance, which is itself a citation, and so on in endless regression. Into each citation is encoded a weight, a guarantee that the term has the power to transform. When a speaker makes an utterance, s/he is not the sole author of the statement. This notion is crucial to notions of authenticity in documentary. It dislocates and relocates agency and origin away from the subject represented and onto broader and more complex social discourses. Our voices are inherently polyphonic. When a documentary subject speaks, s/he is a conduit for a palimpsest of denotations, connotations, contexts, revisions and disputations. The image, however, can only capture that individual. It can not see the discourses s/he cites.

A subject's identity is created in the same way in which performative speech acts operate. Just as a performative utterance functions, race-defining performances derive their binding power through the reiteration of past racial performances. Butler claims that 'performativity must not be understood as a singular or deliberate 'act' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names' (1995:2). The norm 'takes hold to the extent that it is 'cited' as such a norm, but it also derives its power through the citations that it compels' (Butler:13). The fundamental identity of an individual does not originate with the individual who performs that identity, but is rather cited from a community. Gestures, vocal inflections, figures of speech, costumes and attitudes are all circulated through a cultural field. Each member of the field picks them up in the course of his/her lifetime, adopting them as their own. Butler argues that it is only through this citation that the subject is formed at all. Butler argues that '[i]f gender consists of the social meanings that sex assumes, then sex does not *accrue* social meanings as additive properties, but rather, is

replaced by the social meanings it takes on; sex is relinquished in the course of that assumption, and gender emerges' (1995:5). A subject only comes into being through his/her citation of discursive practices.

To make this notion more complex, and to simultaneously make a stable reality more elusive, a subject's identity is not constructed along a single axis of racial orientation. Robert Ezra Park argues that '[w]e are parents and children, masters and servants, teachers and students, clients and professional men [and woman], Gentiles and Jews. It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves' (1950:249). Every individual inhabits a number of roles and each of these roles dictates a subject's overall performance in any documentary. Each individual cites characteristics, acts, performative styles and inflections and strips of behaviour from several cultural fields and communities. A subject's identity is constructed through entry into several exclusionary matrices, each of which is connected and dialectical. For a man who is black, there is a loosely formed 'black man' matrix which provides a batch of strips of behaviour, but this is one of many cultural fields with which a man with black skin interacts. Stuart Hall argues that

our racial differences do not constitute all of us, we are always different, negotiating different kinds of differences – of gender, of sexuality, of class [...] these antagonisms refuse to be neatly aligned: they are simply not reducible to one another; they refuse to coalesce around a single axis of differentiation. We are always in negotiation, not with a single set of oppositions that place us in the same relation to others, but with a series of different positionalities (1997:131).

In constructing his/her identity, an individual with black skin does not simply acquire characteristics from others with black skin. An individual born with black skin will, through the course of his/her life, interact with schoolmates, teachers, friends, workmates and public figures in the media, all of which are likely to be composed of a number of races. The individual's interaction with each contributes to the constitution of his/her identity (Muzafer Sherif, 1967:225). This concept will be essential to my discussion of *Tongues Untied*.

In this brief adumbration of performativity, I wished to illustrate the difficulties and intricacies involved in any representation of social reality, and of the people who occupy it. The subject who speaks and acts in a documentary is a vehicle for congeries of discursive processes and practices which precede and exceed his/her status as a subject. The 'real' is transient and citational. This makes it a very challenging 'thing' to represent.

***The N-Word* (Todd Williams, 2004)**

The N-Word begins with the voice-over stating boldly, 'Hello niggers'. This sets a challenge to its audience. In this single word, the spectator must assimilate the condensed historicity of the term, and decide how comfortable s/he feels about its usage. It also divides the audience into black and white spectators. Is it interpellating black spectators, to either provoke or embrace them? Contrarily, is it implicating white spectators in the history of injury suffered by black Americans, or is it inverting this history by directing it at the perpetrator? The voice-over continues, 'I want each of you to ask yourself a question, like: 'Am I a nigger?'" Throughout the following sequence, the voice-over repeats 'nigger' over and over, like a bassline. This is accompanied by a montage of sepia photographs of forlorn, ragged-looking black children, seemingly from the pre-civil rights and pre-emancipation eras. As we come to terms with the use of this potentially toxic, potentially harmful word, we are visually reminded of the oppression and repression of black life and culture in the US, for which the term is/was a signifier. This sequence acknowledges the implication of the term 'nigger' in the subordination of black culture in the US, which continues today (cf. the neglect of post-Katrina New Orleans illustrated in *When the Levees Broke* (Spike Lee, 2007)). This history of oppression is encoded into the term's citationality. However, in this examination of the term's reconfiguration, Williams does not address whether, or to what extent, this legacy persists in the term's usage. If the

term 'nigger' retains an iterability of derogation, it would be inappropriate to reiterate the term, as the film would be reiterating the term's injurious force. This opening section therefore signals Williams' own assumption that the term 'nigger' is not harmful.

As a black individual himself, Williams may have a special licence to use this term. All of the black interviewees in *The N-Word* reveal that they usually have no objection to the use of the word to and by other black subjects. However, Williams himself does not appear in the documentary, and so the casual spectator may not know whether he is black or white. Would a black audience be at ease with a white filmmaker addressing them with the phrase 'Hello niggers'? The interviewees in *The N-Word* admit to responding quite differently to its utterance by a white individual. This distinction is a crucial element of the term's status as a performative.

It is possible that Williams is using the term in a parasitic manner in this opening sequence. J.L. Austin famously claimed that performative speech acts are only efficacious when uttered 'seriously' (1962:22). A 'performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy [...] Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use – ways which fall under the etiologies of language' (22). Williams presumably does not intend to cite the term in its 'serious' convention, which would qualify as hate speech. Similarly, when I type the word 'nigger' for the purpose of my discussion, I do not intend to use the term as an injurious speech act. With performative utterances, however, intentionality is not the only issue. Austin claims that '[w]hen the speaker intends to produce an effect it may nevertheless not occur [and] when he does not intend to produce it or intends not to produce it it may nevertheless occur' (105). An individual may cite the word 'nigger' without *intending* to be racist, as I just did (and Williams presumably does), but may nevertheless enact the illocutionary force of the term as a derogation and the perlocutionary effect of insulting the reader, as I hope I did not (but can not guarantee). To demonstrate: in 2007, a white contestant was evicted from the reality series *Big Brother* (Endemol, 2000-2010) for referring to a black housemate by the term 'nigger'. This was uttered in a seemingly friendly way, but was nonetheless interpreted as potentially racist by the programme's producers.

There is therefore an intrinsic and enduring uncertainty in how we use speech acts to construct social reality. Some spectators may be under the impression that an injurious word was just uttered (thus an individual was just harmed), but other spectators may disagree (thus an individual was not harmed). Two versions of reality are being proposed here, but the documentary camera can not discern which is the 'correct', or 'real' reality.

In his critique of Austin, Derrida asks, 'is not what Austin excludes as anomalous, exceptional, 'nonserious', that is *citation* (on the stage, in a poem, or in a soliloquy), the determined modification of a general citationality – or rather, a general iterability – without which there would not even be a 'successful' performative?' (2007:128). No matter how many occasions the term 'nigger' is used with no intention to derogate, it will always contain a trace of its history of derogation. As long as it retains some of this citational force, it will retain the power to transform. *The N-Word* is not representing the discrete utterance of a particular word; it is representing a history of discursive social construction, into which centuries of discrimination and subjugation are encoded. The documentary's discourse can not divorce itself from the iterability of the term as injurious.

The force of this iterability is derived from the observation of certain conventions. In order to have a binding power, there must be a consensus between speaker and hearer as to the authority of the speaker to make a performative utterance, and that the context in which the utterance is made is correct. Austin proposes a schema which outlines the conventions required for a performative utterance to function effectively (pp.14-16). Should the persons or context not satisfy the appropriate conventions for the utterance, it is said to 'misfire' (Austin:16); that is, the social order will not recognise the utterance and it will fail to transform social reality. Throughout the interviews which compose *The N-Word*, the discussion consistently fails to address the conventions which establish the term 'nigger' as a performative. The interviews focus almost exclusively on the use and reception of the term as uttered by one black individual to another black individual. Williams' collection of interviewees is almost exclusively black. This may seem appropriate, given that he wishes to investigate the opinions of the black community on the word. However, the conventions established for the term 'nigger' as a performative were its utterance by a light-skinned individual to a darker-

skinned individual. This interpellation brought that dark-skinned individual into discourse as an inferior subject to the lighter-skinned individual. The interviewees all admit to using the term to address their black friends, and the universal consensus is that this is not injurious. However, from a black subject to a black subject, the term will always 'misfire'. *The N-Word* does not explore the crucial question of whether the term 'nigger' would now misfire if uttered by a white individual to a black individual. I would argue that the original conventions which govern the term's status as a performative – as directed by a white individual to a black individual – remain intact. I would argue that when these conventions are observed, the term remains injurious. *The N-Word's* analysis does not adequately take this into account.

The interviewees in *The N-Word* reveal that they each have unique responses to the word 'nigger'. Actor Samuel L Jackson tells us that, 'The first thing you need to know about me is – I'm a nigger...I'm one of those guys you really, really don't want to mess with'. Jackson here evokes a history of puissant blackness, from Black Panthers, to Blaxploitation film heroes to gangster rappers. The pioneering gangster rapper Ice Cube, meanwhile, describes his use of the term as a 'badge of honour'. He claims that his co-opting of the language of the oppressor is a gesture of defiance against that oppression. Or, as hip-hop artist Chuck D later puts it, 'It's like catching garbage and loving it'. These interviews demonstrate that perceptions of this particular speech act are subjective and capricious. In one interview, Chuck D claims that his friends commonly used the term 'nigger' (citing comedian Richard Pryor, who used the word with promiscuity in his stage act), 'but there was also a time called somebody 'Yo, what up, nigger?', cats was like - 'Why I got to be a nigger today?'" One can never be certain how an individual will interpret an utterance in a given situation, at a given time. As Chuck D implies, an individual may be offended one day, but not the other. The illocutionary force of the term has not changed overnight, merely the attitude of the individual. This inconsistency begs an important question: if the individual to whom the term is addressed does not recognise its power to wound, does it therefore misfire? I would argue that the fact that certain individuals in certain situations may not recognise the term's ability to wound does not absolve the term of its power to wound. The iterability, that which makes the term injurious, exists outside of the subject who utters

the word and the subject to whom it is uttered. Even though some individuals may claim that they do not regard it as derogatory, it does not mean that it can not derogate others.

This raises the question who arbitrates a performative speech act: who decides that the correct circumstances are in order and who decides that the speaker has the authority to perform the act? Austin's conventions fail to disseminate this detail. This problem is taken up by Andrew Parker and Eve Sedgwick, who critique Austin's 'rather bland invocation of "the proper context" (1995:7). Parker and Sedgwick argue that

while 'I dare you' [for example] ostensibly involves only a singular first and a singular second person, it effectually depends as well on the tacit requisition of a third person plural, a 'they' of witness – whether or not literally present. In daring you to perform some foolhardy act (or else expose yourself as, shall we say, a wuss), 'I' (hypothetically singular) necessarily invoke a consensus of the eyes of others. It is these eyes through which you risk being seen as a wuss (8).

The efficacy of the performative is therefore determined by a previously unidentified third person or persons. In a documentary, this task falls to the spectator. S/he must decide if, in the event of a performative utterance, the necessary conventions have been satisfied. Different individuals in different times and places may have different opinions on this (cf. the response of *Big Brother* producers, in contrast to the opening voice-over of *The N-Word*). The opening sequence of *The N-Word* and the interviewees assume that use of the term is not offensive or derogatory, but they can only assume this. Performative speech acts are an essential tool which we use to construct the world in which we live. They are, however, culturally, spatially and historically contingent. This makes the documentary quest to represent reality effectively impossible. How may a documentary represent a 'thing', when there is a fundamental disagreement on what the 'thing' is? This becomes particularly significant when the 'thing' is potentially harmful.

The N-Word features a number of interviews with people on the street in order to gauge public opinion. These reveal a distinct geographical diversity in evaluating the term's efficacy as an injurious

performative. A group of (mostly black) Stanford students appear squeamish about the use of the term. Most of them agree that it is used 'too often' in rap. This begs the question; if it is not harmful within these conventions, what difference would volume make? The term either derogates, or it does not. One student argues that it is acceptable in a socially conscious hip-hop song, but not when used in a commercial rap song. She considers aesthetics to play a part in the conventions applied by the term. Meanwhile, a black man in Harlem claims that black people 'have a right to the word' which white people do not. In contrast, a group of white teenagers in Atlanta claim that white people should be free to use the term if black people use it. One girl lambasts the 'double standard' of the rap community in this regard. These disagreements present an insight into the inherent unreliability and confusion surrounding performative statements. As the interviews indicate, different audiences (Parker and Sedgewick) are likely to disagree on the felicity of a performative speech act. This demonstrates that our institutional facts (John Searle, 1995) are frequently contestable.

For as long as some individuals believe that the term 'nigger' can be used as a performative (that is, a speaker, hearer and third-person audience recognise a set of conventions governing its efficacy as a performative speech act), it will remain a performative. The corollary to this is a potentially dangerous uncertainty as to what the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect is when the term is uttered (such as the opening voice-over of *The N-Word*). We may not be able to determine whether a transformation has occurred; whether an individual, or a community was just harmed, or not. Can we instruct an individual that s/he was *not* injured by a racist word? Can we convince an individual that s/he *was* injured, simply because we believe that a set of conventions governing performative utterances was met? If a documentary represents a white individual calling a black individual a 'nigger', can we state for certain that the black individual has been constituted as an inferior subject?

The N-Word explores the opinions of a large collection of people on the application of this particular performative. It reveals that there is no consensus governing the use of this speech act. A performative speech act is intended to change social reality, but *The N-Word* reveals that this reality is contingent and uncertain. If a documentary represents an individual uttering the word 'nigger', it may

be representing an individual causing harm to another individual, or it may be representing an individual causing no harm to another individual. The representation of a speech act is a representation of a concatenation of social discourses and processes, a condensed history of utterances and contexts. *The N-Word* sets out to explore the complexity of speech acts. However, the documentary fails to note the conventions of this performative, into which the term's injurious force is encoded. In doing so, *The N-Word* discovers how much of a challenge performative speech acts present to representation.

***Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs, 1989)**

Tongues Untied is a theatrical and lyrical exhibition of gay black identity and experience. The documentary is comprised of a collection of dances, skits, dramatic readings and monologues, which are strung together by a series of poems by Essex Hemphill. Riggs and Hemphill appear in several of the vignettes (although they are unidentified), but the cast of characters is very large. Riggs' plan is clearly to make the documentary as polyphonic as possible. *Tongues Untied* is innately performative. Most of the scenes are staged for the camera and are set against a black background. The subjects in *Tongues Untied* are not 'being themselves'. They are performing for the camera. In particular, they are performing being 'gay and black' for the camera. Several sequences feature a single man, shot in extreme close-up, narrating a soliloquy representative of gay black life. These men act out their stories in a Brechtian manner; playing the parts of multiple characters in the narrative, whilst keeping up a commentary to the camera. They make illustrative hand gestures, modulate their voices to differentiate between speakers, and look to the left or right to denote which character is intended to be speaking to whom. They are restoring their own behaviour. Through this citation, the act acquires a

force (Butler, 1995:13). Gay black behaviour is usually suppressed; even today it rarely appears in film or television. Restoring gay black behaviour gives it an accumulated force, a legitimacy.

Tongues Untied opens with a montage of slow-motion sequences of black men greeting one another on the street, while the voice-over incants, 'Brother to brother' over and over, to a rising pitch and crescendo. 'Brother' here has a dual interpellation: it hails black men and gay men. Riggs is establishing a community in which he wishes to interpellate his audience (Riggs claims that his intended audience was indeed gay black men (Kleinhaus and Lesage, 1991:19). A running theme in the poems and stories is the search for 'reflections' - in the Lacanian sense of an object with which to identify (1977:pp.1-8). Living and growing up in a dominant white heterosexual cultural field, the gay black man has few reflections. The form of *Tongues Untied* supplies a batch of attitudes and perspectives for the gay black spectator to find his reflection in. This is an intrinsic element of performativity. Identity is cited from a performative community. We can only cite what we can see and interact with. One of the corollaries of the heterosexual white exclusionary matrix is to make gay black identity invisible, or at least to obfuscate its visibility. Riggs' documentary performers are the material provided to constitute the spectator as a particular type of subject. They provide feelings, experiences, attitudes and strips of behaviour.

Tongues Untied attempts to establish a visible gay black community. The title sequence features Riggs dancing naked before the camera. As Sheila Petty observes, Riggs' seeming attempt to portray vulnerability by hiding his face in this scene is somewhat undermined by his musculature (1998:420). Where Riggs covers his face, however, he reveals his body. Riggs is clearly determined to make the black body visible; in detail and in motion. The black body is central to the text's aesthetic: from Riggs' opening dance, to erotic art, 'voguing', the 'Snap Disco', gay pride marches and an extended lovemaking scene. After the opening dance, the camera slowly zooms in on Riggs standing still and alone in a cloak. His stern face looks off-screen, isolated, but under intense scrutiny from the camera's gaze. Riggs then sheds the cloak and is caressed and kissed by another naked man in slow-motion (a gay male kiss remains to this day one of the rarest sights in film and television; a black male kiss remains unheard of). This final shot lingers, and is then replaced by a sequence of a man in

his underwear leaving a message with a dating service. This man reveals himself to be an 'activist and pro-feminist', linking gay black sexuality to revolution. This man's face is never revealed, only various segments of his body: his legs, his arms, his torso; in lingering, forensic detail. Riggs' activation of fetishistic scopophilia here is not used to objectify the female body for a male audience, as we would usually expect (Laura Mulvey, 1975), but rather objectifies the black male body for a male audience. This man's identity is represented only in terms of black physicality, and the desire for black physicality. This technique is challenging, revolutionary even. However, this sequence also establishes a normative gaze, replacing the white (heterosexual) male gaze with the black (homosexual) male gaze. Riggs is using one of the tactics which perpetuate the white heterosexual exclusionary matrix. He simply inverts this to perpetuate a black gay exclusionary matrix.

Voice is also crucial to Riggs' objective is to establish a normative gay black identity. A poem is whispered through Riggs' opening dance: 'Silence is a way to grin and bear it/ A way not to acknowledge how much my life is discounted each day/ Silence is my shield/ It crushes/ Silence is my cloak/ It smothers/ Silence is my sword/ It cuts'. The speaker claims that his method of performing his gay black identity is to remain silent in the face of subjugation and abjection, convincing himself that this is a form of assertion. *Tongues Untied*, however, encourages the gay black spectator to speak out: 'Let's end the silence, baby/ Together/ Now'. This sequence is a call to arms, demanding a particular mode of behaviour from its audience. *Tongues Untied* sets out to revolutionise the way in which gay blackness is performed.

After a series of dramatic anecdotes, we encounter the 'Snap Disco'. This is a choreographed skit in which a group of men show off finger-snapping, a performative element of the gay black culture which Riggs posits. Snapping is a strip of behaviour unique to the gay black community. Each snap is intended to communicate a specific message. Petty argues that 'Riggs uses group shots of black men snapping in unison to visually underscore the notion of an invisible community suddenly choosing to visibly and defiantly declare their mutual association' (420). Riggs claims that 'lots of people snap. They snap on every syllable, and they don't think about it. You can go from Mississippi to California to New York and this cultural form will be recognised. Some people are ashamed about

snap because they look at it and think, 'Oh, we know he's a gay man'. Yet, snap is also a form of resistance, a form of saying, 'Yes, I'm different and I'm proud of it' (Kleinhaus and Lesage:20). The way in which Riggs structures this scene, by including titles and a voice-over to explain the rules and techniques, allows the spectator access to this act. Riggs shows it off, but simultaneously invites the spectator in. This has the form of an instructional video which would allow the spectator to adopt this highly stylized strip of behaviour. One man, who calls himself a 'Snap Diva', recounts an altercation with a blond white woman ('Body by Nautilus...Mind by Mattel') who refuses him entry to a night club. He finishes his anecdote with a snap: 'Three pieces of ID?', then extravagantly snaps his fingers three times - 'She didn't know what hit her'. This snap is belligerent and confrontational ('Don't mess with the Snap Diva'), similar to the 'shade' and 'voguing' depicted in *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston, 1990). This is a puissant method of performing gay blackness.

Tongues Untied also includes several sequences of gay pride marches. The participants in these marches also cite specific strips of behaviour. The men dress in a particular (provocative) way, and they walk and chant rhythmically and in unison. These marches, along with the pro-feminist activist, assert gay black identity as militant. Riggs clearly has his own ideas of what does, or should, constitute gay black identity. However, he does not allow for the possibility that a gay black man may adopt contradictory strips of behaviour and still present a viable form of 'gay blackness'.

Tongues Untied is structured as a direct confrontation between gay black identity and a heterosexual white exclusionary matrix, where gay black identity is immanently abrasive and dolorous in opposition with the dominant white heterosexual identity. Riggs argues that the gay black man can not be interpellated as a subject *of* discourse, only as a subject *against* discourse. In one poem, the speaker describes what he talks about with his 'girlfriends': either sexual conquests or anger at the abjection they suffer as gay black men. They do not speak about the 'hurt' which they feel. The speaker claims, 'I will swallow that hurt'. He refuses to resignify this hurt – which is presented as an immanent feature of gay black experience - even to his gay black friends. This echoes bell hooks' autobiographical tale, '[w]e learned when we were very little that black people could die from feeling rage and exposing it to the wrong white folks. We learned to choke down our rage' (1995:13). This

sets up the conflict which governs gay black identity in the US (as a remnant of slavery and segregation). The speaker resides in one community of gay black friends and another of exclusionary whiteness, which has much more power. This sequence also mirrors Frantz Fanon's assessment of the dyad in which a black individual lives. Fanon argues that the 'black man [*sic*] has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man' (1986:17). Fanon claims that 'not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man' (110). Riggs represents the gay black man as under siege for being gay and black; that is, for adopting strips of behaviour considered subversive by the more powerful and normative straight and white matrix. *Tongues Untied* is an attempt to redress this balance. The 'Snap Disco' and gay pride marches are explicitly assertive methods of asserting the performance of gay blackness. Riggs argues that '[y]ou need somehow to affirm those gestures which the dominant culture looks down upon and considers inferior or reflecting a flawed personality or a flawed culture. We take that and reverse it in a way, so that it becomes a virtue rather than a vice or flaw' (Kleinhaus and Lesage:22). In embracing this confrontation between black and white matrices, Riggs posits blackness as potentially irreconcilable with whiteness.

This concept is highlighted in one sequence, which reenacts Riggs' assault by a group of black men. In voice-over, Riggs describes being rescued by a young white man, as a still photograph of a blond-haired and blue-eyed boy fills the frame. The image of clean-cut Americana comes to the rescue of this abused gay black man. This scene cuts to a gay pride march in The Castro, San Francisco, featuring men in full bondage gear. The men are all white and for the first (and only) time, we see the white male body on display. Riggs goes here to 'cruise white boys'. This is an attempt to 'pass' in gay white culture. In this environment, Riggs claims that 'Maybe from time to time a brother glanced my way. I never noticed. I was immersed in vanilla'. He claims to have come here to find his 'reflection'. He wishes to locate his own identity in a projected (white) image; 'in blue, green and grey eyes'. However, Riggs eventually discovers that 'I was an invisible man. I had no shadow. No substance. No place. No history. No reflection. I was an alien. I was a nigger still'. His attempt to pass in gay white culture was unsuccessful. He failed to assimilate. Peggy Phelan argues that '[p]assing *seems* to suggest a potential performative space in which the binary [between black and white] is broken down. But fundamental to passing is the binary of the seen and the unseen, the visible and the

invisible' (1996:97). Passing, therefore, maintains segregation and opposition. In order to pass successfully, one's black skin (the signifier of blackness) must simply be hidden from sight. Passing does not propose blackness as equal to whiteness, it simply conceals blackness. Passing is not a form of integration. Rather, it enforces the difference and inequality between black and white. It is not a revolutionary act. In this sequence, Riggs claims to have realised that he has an intrinsically black identity, which he lost in his vanilla immersion.

This segment maintains an irreconcilable cleavage between black and white which, I would argue, is misleading. I would argue, drawing upon Stuart Hall (see page 8), that the 'black community' and the 'white community' are not as discrete as this account suggests. Riggs was (he died in 1994) a US citizen, a graduate of Harvard, a university professor, an independent filmmaker, along with the many other roles which he occupied. Riggs' own identity was formed in interaction with all of these roles. Each role an individual inhabits provides him/her with strips of behaviour, with attitudes and acts. A subject's identity exceeds a simple racial axis of orientation. I do not in any way wish to contend Riggs' claim that blackness is an abjected and oppressed role, I merely wish to point out that, in establishing a monolithic black community and identity, Riggs is being reductive (probably intentionally) in his representation of racial identity and identity construction.

One sequence in *Tongues Untied* depicts a triptych of black voices attacking Essex Hemphill, as he sits silently in extreme close-up. Hemphill here is a synecdoche for all gay black men. He is placed in the glare of the black community's exclusionary matrix. A preacher yells 'Abomination!' in a gospel drawl, while another man exhorts, 'We need strong black men', and another excoriates, 'A punk is a punk. I don't want them around my kids. Period'. Throughout this sequence, the camera zooms in and scrutinises Hemphill's impassive face, while all around him this polyphony of black voices insult and derogate him. This sequence is also intercut with footage of Eddie Murphy delivering aggressively homophobic material in his stand-up act, and with a homophobic scene from Spike Lee's *School Daze* (1988). The sources of this material are important. Eddie Murphy was the most famous black film star of the period (*Tongues Untied* was made in 1989), and one of very few A-List black celebrities. Lee, meanwhile, was the pre-eminent black filmmaker of the time, whose films

were (and still are) animated by a strong social conscience. Like Riggs, Lee's remit has always been to give the black community a voice, to assert black identity. Here, however, Lee isolates gay black men from straight black men. It seems that the gay black community suffers the same humiliation within the black community as the black community does within white hegemony. The voice-over claims, 'Sometime we join in the laughter as if deep down we too believe we are the lowest among the low'. The wording here is also crucial. Murphy and Lee's own politicised material foregrounds their allegiance to an oppressed minority, but within this minority is another, lower than this low – the gay black man. Riggs presents an exclusionary matrix at work within the black community. This sequence points to an infinite regress. Within each matrix is a further matrix, and then another.

Riggs, however, does not address the potential problems created for the gay black man who does not fit within the matrix presented by this documentary. In its establishment of a monolithic gay black community, *Tongues Untied* fixes a particular performance of gay blackness. In doing so, Riggs is forming an exclusionary matrix of his own, constructing the gay black man as a subject of his own discourse. By setting out to communicate with a single community, *Tongues Untied* falls into a similar trap to *The N-Word*. Riggs' ambition to establish gay blackness as normative is surely a vital and essential task. However, in focusing on gay blackness Riggs maintains a cleavage between races which is not as clear-cut as he implies. As I have argued, however, no individual or group exists in isolation. The gay black man – the male with dark skin and sexual desire for others of the same sex – uses strips of behaviour from all modes of life, just as all individuals do. The matrices which organise the construction of our identities are permeable. A gay black man does not only interact with gay black men. The discourses represented in a documentary subject's performance emanate from countless cultural fields and exclusionary matrices.

In the beginning of this chapter, I set out to explore the ways in which performativity compromises the bond between the documentary image and the historical world. The authenticity of the indexical bond relies on a stable referent. Social reality, however, is unstable. Through performative utterances, it is subject to change. In addition, there is no uniform consensus which governs its institution and

maintenance. In my discussion of *The N-Word*, I sought to illustrate that a failure to apprehend the conventions of a performative utterance can produce a number of theoretical and representational problems. Derrida and Butler demonstrate that the force encoded into performative utterances is citational. The illocutionary force of the word 'nigger' does not come from the subject who utters it, but from the legacy of usage s/he cites. I then adapted Butler's theory of gender performativity to the performance of race in order to demonstrate that identity itself is citational. *Tongues Untied* addresses this notion. Its truth claim lies not in the definitive representation of its individual subjects, but rather in its postulation of a normative gay black identity. I attempted to show that, while Riggs acknowledges that individual identity is cited from a community, he constructs a discrete and monolithic community himself, which creates its own exclusionary matrix and neglects the permeability of identity construction. The cultural fields from which subjects cite acts, characteristics and strips of behaviour are not discrete and mutually exclusive, as *Tongues Untied* implies; they are permeable and dialectical. Subjects do not cite their identity from a single community (Stuart Hall, 1997).

2. The Presentation of Self

In the previous chapter, I explored documentary performance as the unconscious citation and reiteration of acts, characteristics and strips of behaviour from a cultural field. However, this concept does not allow for our individual will (cf. Arthur Schopenhauer, 1897:pp.95-102). As a being endowed with a consciousness, we all have the ability to make choices in how we present our selves to others. We all wish to influence how we are perceived by other people and so we strategically modify and modulate our conduct. Erving Goffman claims that 'when an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey' (1959:4). The 'presentation of self' is a type of theatre which we all undertake in all social interaction (Goffman). James Naremore argues that 'in daily activity we constitute ourselves rather like dramatic characters, making use of our voices, our bodies, our gestures and costumes, oscillating between deeply ingrained, habitual acts (our 'true mask') and acts we more or less consciously adopt to obtain jobs, mates, or power' (1988:21-22). In the previous chapter, I interrogated the notion of a 'true' self; in this chapter, I will turn my attention to our conscious presentation of self. The presentation of self illustrates the ways in which a documentary subject can influence how s/he is represented by the documentary. Where a documentary frequently sets out to reveal its subject's 'real' self, the subject is in fact presenting an impression of him/herself to the camera in an intentional and calculating way. S/he can convey messages of his/her own volition, and can be tactical and self-serving in doing so.

In this chapter I will analyse self-presentation in two documentaries: *Meet Marlon Brando* (Albert and David Maysles, 1965) and *Marjoe* (Howard Smith and Sarah Kernochan, 1972). Both of these films demonstrate the ways in which a documentary subject can construct a performance of self specifically for the camera, and therefore pose a critical challenge to documentary's putative claim to authenticity. *Meet Marlon Brando* and *Marjoe* are both 'observational' documentaries (Bill Nichols, 1991:pp.38-44), although *Marjoe* has some 'reflexive' elements (Nichols:pp.56-75). Nichols claims

that observational documentary ‘conveys the sense of unmediated and unfettered access to the world’ (43). The objective for the observational filmmaker is to capture the subject acting naturally; that is, to behave as though the camera was not present (Nichols:42). Nichols argues that ‘[o]bservational cinema affords the viewer an opportunity to look in and overhear something of the lived experience of others, to gain some sense of the distinct rhythms of everyday life’ (42). The filmmaking apparatus is passive in the observational mode. The documentarist ‘play[s] the role of uninvolved bystander’, as Erik Barnouw puts it (1993:255). In this mode, more than any other, the documentary ‘cedes control’ to the social actors recruited by the film (Nichols:38). However, the non-interventionist policy of the observational mode permits the subject to present him/herself to the camera in a manner of his/her own design. The camera can only represent what the subject presents to it. Goffman claims that the self which we present to others (including the documentary camera), is not a genuine self, but rather an attempt to portray an ideal or favourable self.

Meet Marlon Brando is a benchmark in direct cinema, the term coined by Albert Maysles to describe the observational mode (Barnouw:240). Stella Bruzzi’s discussion on performance in this mode emphasises the appearance of acting naturally on-screen (2006:pp.153-162). Bruzzi argues that the subject in direct cinema ‘becomes accessible to the spectator [...] through an ability to turn in a non-performance’ (159). However, I would argue that this notion of a ‘non-performance’ is a chimera. Goffman argues that all social interaction is a performance, in which individuals undertake strategic impression management, to one end or another. In *Meet Marlon Brando*, Brando makes it abundantly clear that he is consciously performing for the camera, rather than simply ‘acting naturally’.

Theoretically promoting his new film *Morituri*, Brando attends a luncheon with a clutch of reporters, each seeking to discover and reveal elements of Brando’s real self. Brando, however, is determined to repel their efforts. Brando radically alters the tone and register of his performance between each interview: with one reporter he is peremptory and uncooperative; with another he is flirtatious; with another he is philosophical. Brando refuses to present a uniform self, which may be perceived as genuine. As such, it is manifestly apparent that he is not being genuine. Brando’s performance is a barrier which prevents access to his real self. In analysing Brando’s performance, I will also examine the ways in which the roles we occupy in any interaction demand a specific presentation of self. We

anchor our self-presentation to certain roles. In *Meet Marlon Brando*, Brando's primary role is a celebrity promoting his new film. Brando's performance, however, is incongruous with the performance we expect. Brando's obtuseness calls attention to the fact that playing a role in everyday life is consonant to playing a role on film.

Marjoe follows Marjoe Gortner, a fraudulent Pentecostal preacher, as he undergoes a tour of churches throughout the US. Gortner began his preaching career at the age of four and quit the profession at the age of fourteen, only to return in his mid-twenties. Gortner has no personal faith, but presents himself to Pentecostal congregations as a genuine evangelist. Gortner gives two distinct performances in *Marjoe*: preacher and whistle-blower. The documentary shoots Gortner's sermons in the manner of a rock concert (cf. direct cinema pioneer D.A. Pennebaker's representation of Bob Dylan in concert in *Don't Look Back* (1967)), with the camera tracking Gortner as he stalks the pulpit, capturing the histrionics of his performance and the rapt attention and reactions of the audience. In these scenes, the filmmakers make no attempt to dissect the artifice of Gortner's performance, but rather seek simply to capture the full effect of the performance. Away from the church, Gortner reveals the performative techniques and tricks he uses to dupe his congregation. I will closely analyse the ways in which Gortner manufactures his preacher performance, in order to illustrate how an entirely artificial, calculating performance can pass as a 'real' self. In addition, I will demonstrate that, while *Marjoe* illustrates the extent to which an individual can deceive an audience with his presentation of self, the documentary film relies upon the authenticity of Gortner's non-preacher performance. Gortner's whistle-blower role is presented as his authentic, real self, in counterpoint to his inauthentic preacher role. Drawing upon Goffman, I argue that all documentary subjects are always presenting themselves in conscious and tactical ways.

Goffman posits a dichotomy of 'cynical' and 'sincere' performers to denote the degree to which an individual is calculating in his/her presentation of self (1959:pp.18-19). A sincere performer is one who believes his/her act to be genuine, whereas a cynical performer puts on a strategic performance in order to foster a specific impression of him/herself. 'Cynical' and 'sincere' are opposite ends of a continuum, along which an individual may be located at any point in his/her

performance and along which s/he may move in the course of the performance. As a preacher, Gortner represents the apotheosis of what Goffman terms a cynical performer. A cynical performer will withhold certain information from his/her audience or manufacture information conducive to the impression s/he seeks to produce. I argue that all documentary subjects are, to one degree or another, cynical. It is reasonable to presume that most documentary subjects will attempt to conceal information which would be malefic or embarrassing to them, and also reasonable to assume that subjects will avail themselves of the opportunity to present themselves in a positive light where possible. In being cynical, a documentary performer occludes the documentary text's claim to authenticity; the performance is an intentionally constructed barrier between the individual's sincere feelings and the documentary camera.

Despite the fact that an intentional presentation of self is an intrinsic part of all social interaction, we still expect one another to be acting 'sincere'. Goffman argues that '[i]f a performance is to come off, the witnesses by and large must be able to believe that the performers are sincere' (71). We rarely take into account the fact that, as Robert Ezra Park argues, 'everyone is always, more or less consciously, playing a role' (1950:249). The key to a plausible presentation of self is to convince the audience that one is not 'performing' at all; that one's actions are signifiers of one's genuine feelings. Goffman claims that '[w]e tend to see real performances as something not purposely put together at all, being an unintentional product of the individual's unselfconscious response to the facts of his situation' (70). With his congregation, it is imperative that Gortner's cynical performance be interpreted as sincere. In contrast, Brando foregrounds the fact that his performance is cynical, explicitly informing his audience that his performance is not sincere.

There is always greater pressure on our presentation of self when we are with an unfamiliar audience, as the audience will be drawing inaugural and formative conclusions from it. Goffman argues that '[t]he more information the audience has about the performer, the less likely it is that anything they learn during the interaction will radically influence them. On the other hand, where no prior information is possessed, it may be expected that the information gleaned during the interaction will be relatively crucial' (222). In most documentaries, the audience has no previous information about

the individual represented. A documentary subject's presentation of self, therefore, is likely to be particularly strategic and intense. If we present ourselves in tactical and meticulous ways to one another in everyday social interaction, it is axiomatic that we will be even more motivated to create a particular impression of ourselves to the camera. That is not to say that there are no sincere moments in a documentary performance; it is my argument that the awareness of the camera will innately produce an elevated awareness of one's conduct. The presentation of self will be more meticulous when one is aware of being recorded.

Although the presentation of self is an intrinsic part of social interaction, it is impossible for an audience to definitively determine to what extent or to what end the subject is managing his/her performance. All performers, no matter how sincere or cynical they wish to be, must use the same gestures, sounds and strips of behaviour to communicate his/her message to another individual. Strips of behaviour are value-neutral; it is only the intent of the performer which is sincere or cynical, and this is impossible to empirically ascertain. The conclusions the spectator reaches about the subject's performance can only ever be based on assumptions. Goffman claims that the 'true' or 'real' attitudes, beliefs, and emotions of the individual can be ascertained only indirectly, through his [*sic*] avowals or through what appears to be involuntary expressive behavior' (2). Each spectator will have his/her own process for doing this; his/her own investment and his/her own prejudices. Since *Marjoe* was released in 1972, a number of scandals have occurred to discredit the probity of proselytising evangelists, notably lurid extra-marital sex scandals involving Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart in 1986 and, more recently, the vituperatively anti-homosexual Ted Haggard, who was caught *en flagrante* with a rent boy in a bus station convenience in 2007. A contemporary congregation may therefore not be as credulous as Gortner's. On the other hand, a person of faith may not be disposed to question the sincerity of a preacher's performance, and may unquestioningly take the act as genuine. Equally, while Brando explicitly alters his performance style so radically that it is obvious that he is consciously managing his self-presentation, it is quite impossible to conclude at which points, and to what extent, Brando is cynically presenting himself.

The documentary filmmaker forces the subject to perform a role and it is unavoidable that the subject will choose how s/he performs that role, and to what end. However, over the course of a cynical performance, patterns may emerge. We may be able to identify consistencies which point to a self behind the cynical self. Richard Schechner outlines a concept of performance in which the performer, upon assuming a role, comes to occupy a transcendent state, in which they become 'not me...[but] not not me' (1985:113). The subject, in playing a part which is 'not me', becomes melded with the role, giving part of his/her own identity to it. The performer ('me') may be putting on a cynical performance ('not me'), but any role which an individual occupies is still intrinsically bound up in who they are at that moment, both corporeally and intuitively ('not not me'). Therefore, while starting out as 'not me', the performer is 'not not me' either. What was subjunctive and cynical is also indicative and sincere. The performer therefore becomes intrinsically integrated into the 'not me', and it into his/herself. We may never encounter the 'me' in a documentary, but the text can represent the 'not not me'. The crucial point is that no performance is completely cynical or sincere.

As in the theatre, there is a distinction between on-stage and off-stage in the presentation of self. On-stage behaviour is that which is in the presence of an audience, where the individual is performing in such a way as to foster a particular impression of him/her self. Off-stage behaviour is unsuitable for the performance and must be concealed or suppressed. In 'those interactions where the individual presents a product to others, he will tend to show them only the end product, and they will be led into judging him on the basis of something that has been finished, polished, and packaged' (Goffman:44). In *Meet Marlon Brando*, Brando is theoretically off-stage. He is not playing a screen role, but is rather being himself. The dyadic structure of *Marjoe* presents Gortner as on-stage (cynically performing as a preacher), and off-stage ('sincerely' being himself). Again, Goffman reveals this distinction to be false. I would argue that all documentary subjects (who are aware that they are being recorded) are on-stage. They are intentionally presenting a product to the audience.

The on-stage element of the presentation of self has a 'front' which sets the context of the performance, organising meaning for the players and audience (Goffman:22). Front is 'the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his

performance [and] functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance' (22). Goffman identifies three elements of front: setting (the stage); personal front (the physical performance, including costume and props); and social front (the social roles and tropes activated by the performance) (pp.22-26). Meanings generated by the individual performer are attached to and filtered through elements of the front in order to produce the overall meaning of the performance. In *Marjoe*, Gortner performs in two distinct fronts: in church, and away from the church, with the camera crew and his friends. Each front places certain constraints on Gortner's performance and yields numerous potential denotations and connotations. Gortner alters each performance to suit each front. He does this in order to prevent his cynicism from being exposed. I will examine this in detail in my case study. The front of *Meet Marlon Brando* is a noisy restaurant, packed with a gaggle of reporters, and with the Maysles brothers' camera. Brando's physical performance takes place within this stage. In contrast to Gortner, Brando subverts the expectations of his front. This calls attention to the cynicism of his performance.

When human agency is factored into the representation of the historical world, it once again becomes clear that authorship does not reside solely in the hands of the filmmaker. One method by which documentary is distinguished from fiction is that the on-screen interaction is unscripted (Nichols, 1991:pp.3-8); it is intended to be spontaneous and natural. However, the presentation of self is a form of scripting. The individual presents an *ad hoc*, dramaturgically conceived, character to his/her audience, which has specific motivations and an intended outcome. I do not wish to overstate the extent to which we are rational and tactical in our self-presentation. My intention is to demonstrate that any individual will inevitably tailor the way in which s/he presents him/her self to the documentary camera, to one end or another, and that the camera is unable to ascertain to what extent the individual is doing so. We do not know the subject's designs, or the scale and commitment of their performance.

***Marjoe* (Howard Smith and Sarah Kernochan, 1972)**

Marjoe begins with a reflexive sequence. A crudely hand-written cue card is held up in shot, and the director can be heard counting down the prompt. The first figure we see is the sound recordist, sitting on a motel bed, adorned with headphones, boom microphone and drooping cigarette. The camera then turns to Gortner, sitting cross-legged on the floor. Gortner proceeds to advise the crew, all of whom are glimpsed variously lounging throughout the room, on how to compose themselves when in the company of the Pentecostal congregation. This scene sets up the film as an undercover operation. The crew will follow Gortner as he delivers his sermons, without ever revealing that they know his act to be fraudulent. In order to protect Gortner's secret, they must also present themselves cynically. Gortner goes on to detail some of the methods he deploys to convince the congregation that he is a sincere preacher. As he does so, Gortner slips into his preacher character to illustrate his performance techniques. These moments demonstrate the vast disparity in the manner in which he presents himself to the camera and the manner in which he presents himself as a preacher. They also illustrate the ease with which Gortner is able to slip in and out of character. We instantly witness how effective Gortner's cynical performance is, and how easily and smoothly he can activate it. The documentary is composed of a number of similar, off-stage scenes, interspersed with extended sequences of Gortner in action as he preaches to several congregations throughout the US.

As a preacher, Gortner must manufacture his performance like any dramatic character. Speech, gesture, costume and props must all be carefully planned and rehearsed in order to portray the character convincingly. Gortner must maintain 'expressive coherence' (Goffman:56) among those elements in order to present a cogent impression. Gortner must apply the strips of behaviour required to create the impressions associated with the role of a preacher. I will begin this case study with a close analysis of the methods Gortner uses to confect his cynical performance. Gortner offers an intriguing insight into how a completely fabricated presentation of self can hoodwink an audience.

The most obvious method we have available for self-presentation is through verbal communication. We can tell our audience what we would like them to believe. Our intonation, inflection and voice modulation can all also be used to regulate the meaning we convey to our audience. On-stage, Gortner assumes a distinctive cadence and rhythm in his speech: he speaks much more quickly than off-stage; his enunciation is much more pronounced; he adopts the Southern drawl coterminous with Gospel preachers (although Gortner hails from California). His pitch rises to a crescendo with each sentence and then tails off; building tension and then releasing it with the rhythms of his speech. This is in marked contrast to Gortner's off-stage performance, where he speaks softly and quietly. Off-stage, Gortner allows himself to be interrupted and he is very polite and responsive. On-stage, his tone is extremely forceful, if not aggressive.

Gortner also adopts key figures of speech when performing on-stage. Throughout the sermons, Gortner repeatedly incants 'Thank you Jesus', 'Hallelujah' and 'Praise the Lord'. These are code words which enforce the meaning of his front and which inculcate the audience with the authenticity and gravity of the performance. In doing so, they cite the 'historicity of force' (Judith Butler, 1995:203) associated with these words, as uttered in this context. His congregation also repeat these words back to him. This method of call-and-response draws the audience into the performance. Gortner makes the audience a part of the performance, and so it becomes more like a ritual. Gortner is, however, always in control. The figures of speech concomitant with one role may be quite incompatible with other roles. Off-stage, Gortner never uses these terms with the crew or his friends. Instead, he uses terms such as 'tripped out' or 'I really enjoy getting it off on-stage'. This makes it easy for the documentary audience to differentiate between Gortner's two roles, and so further enforce the binary between on-stage and off-stage presented by the film. However, Gortner may be deliberately using certain terms in the presence of the documentary crew in order to consciously distance himself from his on-stage performance; that is, they may be terms which indicate a willingness to be sincere, but they have been cynically applied in order to ensure that his message gets across. Having revealed that Gortner is a masterful cynical performer, who commands an array of performative strategies with which to craft a cynical performance, the structure of *Marjoe* does not acknowledge the fact that Gortner may be doing the same thing to the documentary audience when supposedly off-stage.

Costume and props are also crucial elements of the presentation of self. Clothing is a signifier by which we can represent our selves to others and to allow them to form an inaugural impression of us (cf. Richard Sennett, 2002:pp.65-72). Away from the church, Gortner is usually dressed in psychedelic vest tops, whereas in church he always wears a white suit and tie. Clearly, his off-stage wardrobe would present an unacceptable dissonance in the personal front associated with his on-stage role. This dissonance could cause the audience to question his authenticity. Gortner also uses a gingham handkerchief, or 'prayer cloth', as a prop in his sermons. James Naremore argues that '[p]art of the actor's job [...] is to keep objects under expressive control, letting them become signifiers of feeling' (1988:87). Gortner incorporates his cloth into his performance; he waves it to conduct the audience, he mops his brow and covers his face with it. A performance is composed of many elements. By identifying and adopting the correct elements, Gortner adds texture and depth to his performance, thereby making it more convincing.

Gesture is also a language which we use to present ourselves. Naremore argues that 'all our feelings are wedded to a behavioral *langue* that we have mastered and turned into an idiolect' (69). Delsarte, meanwhile, argues that gesture is in fact a more powerful conveyor of meaning than spoken language; gesture 'is the commentator upon speech' (1970:188). Any body movement can convey meaning. Sanor Feldman undertakes a psychoanalytical method of examining body language. He suggests that an 'erect head expresses self-esteem, self-confidence, courage, looking ahead, health, stamina, pride, and strength' (1959:198). A bowed head, meanwhile, signifies 'humility, resignation, guilt, and admission' (198). While Feldman is perhaps too empirical in his analysis, there is nonetheless an indexical relationship between certain feelings and attitudes and physical gestures, with which we are broadly familiar. However, we do not decode nonverbal messages as uniformly or definitively as verbal messages. As Julia Kristeva claims, '[w]hile it is clear that gesturality is a communication system that transmits a message, and that consequently it can be considered a language or a signifying system, it is nevertheless still difficult to clarify certain elements of this language' (1989:303). Nonverbal communication is much more polysemic and open to interpretation than verbal communication. A performer, no matter how cynical or sincere, can not guarantee that his/her audience will decode his/her signals as s/he intends. The consequence for documentary's

mission to represent the real is, once more, an occurrence of disagreement and disputation over what may constitute the real.

Gortner gives a distinctive physical performance in his sermons. On-stage, Gortner is extremely animated, stalking the altar from side to side, and up and down the pews, throwing his arms wide, and bouncing up and down on his toes. His movements are markedly similar to Mick Jagger, as he jigs up and down, pirouettes, punches the air and clutches the microphone. This has the effect of making him a spectacle; he demands that the audience always looks at him. His movements and gestures are decisive and forceful. He frequently points at his audience, and alternates this with pointing at the sky. In so doing, he seems to wish to construct an indexical relationship between heaven, himself and his audience. He also appears to be channelling great energy. This becomes particularly apparent when he begins speaking in tongues. One expectation of this role is that he be infused with the Holy Ghost. Gortner attempts to convey this impression physically. Off-stage, of course, Gortner's physical performance is quite different. The most striking contrast between Gortner's two performances is a cut from one of his high-energy sermons to a scene where he lies supine on a waterbed and ruminates on the Pentecostal movement. Gortner rarely critiques the faith or its followers but, significantly, in this scene he describes the movement as 'screwed up' and the people as 'kinda weird'. This scene enforces the distance between Gortner's two roles quite explicitly, through the contrast in his physical performance.

Gortner's physicality also has an extreme power with his congregation. As people line up at the altar to receive their prayer cloths, Gortner lays hands upon them, grabbing them fiercely by the head and neck. This causes them either to fall into a seeming cataleptic state, or to flail and thrash hysterically. In the midst of one frenzy, a man thrusts off his walking stick and dexterously flexes his disabled leg. While we may leave it to his congregation to form their own conclusions on the veracity of Gortner's healing powers, our knowledge that he is a cynical performer places some doubt upon this development. We do not know if Gortner has genuinely healed this man, but our information about the type of performer which he is informs our conclusions about the development. Audience members who believe Gortner to be sincere are much more affected by his performance.

Careful control of facial expressions is essential to maintain expressive coherence. George Mead argues that the 'part of our organism that most vividly and readily expresses emotions is the face' (1946:15). Umberto Eco's analysis of Richard Nixon's infamous televised Watergate address concludes that the 'narrative construction would have been perfect had the discourse been a written text. But it was 'spoken', and every muscle of Nixon's face betrayed embarrassment, fear, tension' (1985:11). Off-stage, Gortner frequently smiles and laughs. His audience may interpret this as playful and friendly. On-stage, however, Gortner never smiles. His features are much more set and stern and he never changes his expression. This may be to complement the gravity of his message as a preacher, and a desire not to appear flippant.

This is the performance which Gortner puts on when presenting himself as a preacher. It is cynically constructed in order to present an impression of a fervent evangelist, and it (apparently) fools his audience. As the audience of this documentary, we are in a privileged position where we know that this performance is cynical. However, were we part of the congregation, no doubt Gortner would have us as fooled as anyone else. If *Marjoe* did not include the 'off-stage' scenes, this writer for one would assume that the documentary represented a sincere, authentic preacher.

Even in such a cynical self-presentation as Gortner's, however, there is an extent to which a real, unconscious self may irrupt into the performance. As capricious and impulsive creatures, we are not always - or in fact we are rarely - coldly rational and tactical. Fluctuations in attitude, temper and demeanour can affect the choices we make in presenting our selves. The sermon which Gortner gives alongside his father is interesting in this regard. Throughout the film, he has informed us that he has virtually no relationship with his father, whom he resents for forcing him to become a preacher as a child, and for siphoning his income. Surprisingly, then, in one scene, Gortner and his father deliver a sermon together. The presence of his father brings Gortner's two performances dangerously close together and his performance in this scene is markedly different to his other sermons. While previously Gortner has stated his distaste for the fire and brimstone element of religious discourse, here he suddenly becomes very militant. He warns the congregation that those who do not proselytise for God with sufficient fervour should be consigned to Hell; he criticises other preachers for not being

authentic; and he chastises worshippers for dancing inappropriately in church. Gortner is also more animated than in other performances. His movements are faster and jerkier. As he stamps across the pulpit and up and down the aisle, Gortner's body is convulsed with tremors, as though he is on the verge of uncontrollable hysteria. His voice is also much louder and sharper than in other sermons and delivers his words in a more pronounced staccato. This may be the 'not me...not not me' aspect of Gortner's performance. Cynical though his performance is, it is possible that genuine agitation at his father's proximity has dictated the way in which he performs his role. An alteration in his innermost disposition may have impelled him to select particular strips of behaviour over other strips of behaviour.

Gortner's evangelical performance has extremely high stakes. If he were discovered to be cynical, it would presumably incur disastrous consequences. Gortner must therefore maintain 'audience segregation' (Goffman:49) to ensure that his two audiences are not mixed or confused. In the opening scene, Gortner warns the documentary crew that their hairstyles and cigarette smoking would be unacceptable in Pentecostal environs, while in other scenes Gortner's friends are shown smoking and drinking in his company. As a Pentecostal grandee, it would be incumbent upon Gortner, when in character, to rebuke this behaviour, but to do so here this would alienate his audience. Conversely, elements of his off-stage performance would be completely unacceptable in the church setting. For instance, his claim that he believes in karma would probably be sufficient to jeopardise his plausibility as a Christian evangelist. In addition, the blatant avarice he exhibits off-stage – dumping a bag of cash on his bed and playfully throwing it in the air while singing gospel songs – seems to be a taboo subject with the church. The money, the preachers tell their congregation, is for Jesus. Off-stage, Gortner makes it plain that it is anything but. This motivation is concealed from his Pentecostal audience. Gortner also laments that fact that he cannot introduce his own beliefs into his sermons. He claims to object to the preaching of Hell and eternal punishment, stating that he would rather focus on praise and celebration. However, as Gortner claims, 'you can't do it that way'. The rules of the role will not allow it. In one sermon, Gortner castigates some worshippers for 'doing the boogaloo' while in the throes of religious ecstasy. 'That's carnal and you know it', he states. This

puritanical stance is irreconcilable with his salacious off-stage comment in which he claims that he 'sticks with airline stewardesses' in his social life.

Off-stage, Gortner exposes the cynicism of his on-stage performance. This opposition implies that the off-stage scenes are inherently sincere. To accentuate the proposed authenticity of the off-stage performance, the camera crew is frequently included in the frame. Like all reflexive moments in documentary, these scenes have implicit veracity (Nichols, 1991:pp.56-75). Documentaries employ reflexive practices in order to, as John Corner puts it, 'show their hand' (1996:25); that is, to encourage the spectator to evaluate the image critically. A reflexive sequence is less overtly mediated than other sequences. The presence of the crew in shot makes the image appear less polished and crafted. It is therefore presented as more spontaneous and authentic. The way in which *Marjoe* is framed therefore endows Gortner's off-stage performance with increased authority. As a whistle-blower, Gortner is providing us with truth. We assume that he is being honest. However, Gortner's honesty about one thing is not in itself a guarantor of authenticity. Even in his off-stage role, as I hope to have established, Gortner will be presenting himself in a conscious way.

The question which *Marjoe* raises, but fails to acknowledge, is whether Gortner's convincing performance as a preacher casts doubt upon the reliability of his performance when theoretically 'being himself'. Gortner frequently deploys his stage character in order to illustrate performance techniques to the crew or to amuse his friends. That he can be so spontaneous and adroit in doing so makes it difficult to adjudicate any other performance he can give. There are some encounters where we, as the audience, have no way of telling to what extent Gortner is being cynical or sincere. One particular example of this is when he has dinner with a husband and wife preacher team. Here, he does not adopt his on stage performance *in toto*, but he still performs in such a way as to protect this role. He does not use the verbal and nonverbal histrionics of his preacher, but he does not allow any elements into his presentation of self which would disrupt the impression that he is a sincere preacher. At one point, the wife claims that the thing she likes about Gortner is his honesty, while the husband offers him the opportunity to take over their church while they are out of the country. Clearly, Gortner's performance is still plausible to them. For the documentary audience, without the on-stage

signifiers which we know to be cynical, it is difficult to discern from Gortner's performance just how cynical he is being. We can test some elements of this performance against information we already have and identify elements which perpetuate what we know to be cynical. However, in the main, we only know which aspects of the performance are cynical because Gortner has told us so. At no point can we empirically conclude to what extent Gortner is being cynical or sincere, either in his on-stage character or his-off stage character.

***Meet Marlon Brando* (Albert and David Maysles, 1965)**

Marjoe shows fabrication. *Meet Marlon Brando* exhibits intransigence. Brando adopts a cynical performance which acts as a bulwark against his interviewers' attempts to penetrate his real, or sincere, self. Unlike Gortner, Brando makes it apparent that his performance is cynical; he makes no attempt to construct a veneer of sincerity. Brando's cynical performance is constructed as a barrier between himself and the camera. Brando refuses to answer many of their questions, or provides obtuse and challenging responses to others. Brando intentionally makes himself an elusive subject, and makes it plain that he is putting on a performance (i.e., he makes it clear that he is not acting naturally). Brando employs an explicitly cynical presentation of self to deconstruct the intrinsic cynicism of the presentation of self.

Brando performs for two audiences in this documentary. The first audience is the individual reporter who interviews Brando in each encounter, along with some unseen patrons, whom we can hear laughing, and to whom Brando addresses occasional remarks. Brando refuses to cooperate with the dynamic the reporters attempt to establish. Brando's second audience is the documentary camera. *Meet Marlon Brando* is shot in a direct cinema style, with no intervention from the filmmakers. The

camera records each interview from a fixed position, incorporating Brando and his interviewer facing one another, and occasionally cutting to an extreme close-up on Brando's face. In each interview, the reporter monopolises most of Brando's attention. However, in a style anathema to direct cinema's objective, Brando also addresses the camera on occasion, making it clear that he is aware of its presence. Brando is therefore a cynical documentary subject, refusing to pretend that the camera is not there, as John F Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey do in *Primary* (Drew Associates, 1960), or the subjects of *Salesman* (Albert and David Maysles, 1969). Brando makes a point of informing us that he is conscious of being filmed. This move refutes the direct cinema claim that the subject is observed acting naturally.

Brando's performance seems to be a conscious effort to inform both audiences that they are not capturing his real self, but rather a product which he is intentionally presenting to them. At one point, Brando advises one interviewer, 'we're all actors. The way you conduct yourself is not the way you would conduct yourself in a bar with your friends'. As he says this, Brando looks directly at the camera, addressing the apparatus as he offers his critique upon its structure. Brando wishes to call attention to the fact that both he and the interviewers are performing – both for each other and for the camera. A documentary can only represent a performance, not the real core of the individual responsible for it. Brando resists the notion that his true self can be represented and repeatedly lectures the reporters on the impossibility of their task. When one interviewer states 'That's sort of your whole personality in a capsule', Brando challenges, 'How do you know what my personality is?', to which the interviewer responds, 'Because I've met you and you radiate your personality'. The interviewer does not acknowledge the fact that Brando may be radiating merely a version of his personality, deliberately concealing some characteristics or accentuating others, or fabricating characteristics (this is particularly naïve given that her subject is one of the finest Method actors in US cinema, who could presumably deliver a completely convincing performance without any indication that he was dissembling. I argue that, the fact that Brando's performance is so patently insincere in this documentary, is a sign that he wishes it to be perceived as such).

We can perform our selves in a variety of ways, and a skilful performer may make it impossible for the audience to determine how cynical or sincere s/he is (cf. Gortner). Judging Brando purely by his performance in this documentary would provide a number of possible interpretations of his personality. At times he seems flippant, at others he is evasive, other times he is witty, while at others he appears thoughtful and philosophical. With some male reporters Brando is jovial and gregarious, whereas with the more attractive female reporters he behaves quite differently. With most of the male reporters, Brando performs as though he is disinterested and unengaged. With the female reporters (who all appear to be ex-beauty queens), Brando signals his sudden engagement by altering his *gest*: unlike at other points in the film, he maintains extended eye contact, he does not change the subject or look out of frame. The apparent goal of his presentation of self has changed, and so has his performance accordingly. Brando achieves his layered performance by selecting different strips of behaviour for each interaction. By selecting such substantively diverse and incongruent strips of behaviour, Brando calls attention to the fact that he is choosing to perform in a certain way. The less obvious it is that we are intentionally selecting strips of behaviour, the more our audience will believe our performance to be sincere (Goffman:70). Brando's performance is manifestly cynical.

Brando's performance is at times distinctly Brechtian. He looks repeatedly out of frame and engages off-screen characters in conversation. In one interview, which Brando conducts in French, he makes an apparently concerted attempt to answer the question put to him. He frowns – a potential signifier of careful consideration – and, unusually, responds to the question directly. However, eventually he notices a young woman off-camera and turns his attention to her. He then puts the question he was asked to her, believing her to be able to answer it more accurately. Where Gortner's performance is expressively coherent, Brando is, seemingly intentionally, expressively *incoherent*. His performance is dramaturgically indisciplined. If a performance is expressively coherent, it creates the illusion that what we are seeing is genuine. Brando's unpolished performance alienates the audience from the role he is supposed to be playing and calls explicit attention to the fact that he is indeed playing a role. As an off-stage celebrity, it is clear that the reporters believe that Brando is being himself; that is, he is not performing. In *Meet Marlon Brando*, Brando performs in such a manner as

to remind the reporters, and us, that these interactions are in fact a performance, in which the self presented to the audience is a product, rather than a true or real self.

Brando's principal goal seems to be to repudiate and deconstruct the roles into which the documentary and the gaggle of reporters wish to interpellate him. The roles we inhabit in society dictate, to a large extent, the ways in which we present ourselves (Robert Ezra Park, 1950:249). In order to perform a role effectively, we must customise our presentation of self to adhere to its performative rules. Roles give the individual a touchstone for his/her performance and provide a batch of strips of behaviour which the performer can apply to his/her performance of the role. Roles function as a kind of shorthand in social interaction, which allow the audience to know what to expect of an unfamiliar performer and what will be expected of them in the encounter. Ezra Park argues that 'if individuals are to live together [...] they should know what to expect of one another' (362). The role an individual occupies in any given interaction allows the audience to place an interpretative framework on the situation. We can reference the performance to what we know about the role in order to check its veracity. When a reporter lavishes praise on a celebrity and his/her new film, s/he is merely playing a role. When a celebrity promotes his/her new film and divulges seemingly personal information, s/he is merely performing in the manner expected of him/her as a celebrity.

In *Meet Marlon Brando*, Brando ostensibly plays the role of a film star promoting his new film, or, as he terms it, as 'huckster'. As a huckster, Brando would presumably be aware of the performance techniques required for the role. In line with other film stars in this situation, he is expected to be genial and cooperative with the press and ebullient about the quality of his product. By freely identifying himself as a huckster, however, Brando informs us that he has no intention of actually playing this role. Brando refuses to act in a manner congruent with the role he occupies. The voice-over claims that Brando 'has always reserved the right to think for himself, to answer for himself'. This seems an asinine remark, but it in fact offers an astute observation into the way in which role playing is regulated. What the voice-over means is that Brando resists the regulations placed upon his role; that is, he uses strips of behaviour which are incompatible with the role as we customarily apprehend it. He goes 'against the grain'. For this, he is punished. One reporter claims

'very often you have been called, by members of the press, uncooperative'. Brando explains that, 'it's sort of an unwritten code that, if you don't cooperate with those people [the media] and tell them about the intimacies of your personal life, then you've broken the rule and you have to be publicly chastised for it'. Brando's obtuse performance creates a dissonance between the self-presentation expected by a film star and the presentation of self which he actually delivers.

The reporters, meanwhile, repeatedly attempt to interpellate Brando into his huckster role. They demand that he promote his new film and always try to redirect his digressions back to the topic of the film. They lavish praise on his physical attributes, his acting talent and his repartee skills. Brando declines to accept their praise, however. Brando refutes his own celebrity status, comparing his fame to a hula hoop or a fly swatter; 'It catches on and everybody buys it, quite popular for a while, then it disappears'. He repudiates the self-presentation adopted by most other celebrities. In so doing, Brando confirms his status as a 'rebel star' (Richard Dyer, 1998:31). Throughout his career, Brando consistently presented himself as 'non-conformist' (Dyer:35). It is therefore possible that an essence of sincerity may be derived from this pattern. The very strips of behaviour which a subject selects for a given performance, even though they may be selected with cynical intent, may provide an insight into a sincere motivation or attitude. When put into a situation to which we are averse, we may choose to act 'belligerent' or 'charming' or, as Brando chooses, 'uncooperative'. In the act of suppressing other impressions, Brando unavoidably presents a definite impression of himself. In choosing to be cynical, Brando demonstrates a cynical side to his self. Brando's explicitly cynical self-presentation informs his two audiences that his performance is 'not me'. However, his repudiation of his celebrity status and refusal to be diplomatic with the reporters is a recurring characteristic in his many public presentations of self, which may reveal some of his real, or sincere characteristics ('not not me').

Brando also pointedly critiques the way in which the reporters present themselves. He challenges their enthusiasm for his film and for their interaction with him. When one interviewer tells him that she loved *Morituri*, rather than graciously accepting the compliment as we may expect, Brando challenges her and discovers that she has not in fact seen the film. Later, when he is asked to

talk about the film, as is expected of a film star in this scenario - on this stage - he immediately asks back 'Why?' The reporter answers, 'because we're looking forward to seeing it in Boston', to which Brando responds, 'Well, that's the thing - are you?' The expectation of her role is that she show interest in the film and encourage Brando to promote it. Brando, however, challenges the authenticity of the way she, as a reporter, presents herself. He questions whether her apparent interest in the film, and desire to get to know him, are sincere. The abrasiveness of the interaction between Brando and his interviewers calls attention to the fact that interactions such as this are usually carefully managed performances. Interviewers behave in a prescribed way, and interviewees behave in a prescribed way. This is a universal part of all of our everyday interactions; we all tailor our presentation of self to suit the roles we inhabit in given situations. When Brando peremptorily challenges the reporter from Boston, he implies that she is cynically presenting herself, but pretending to be sincere. All of the reporters claim to have liked *Morituri*, and to be excited about its release. They are almost certainly not all being sincere; as Brando reveals, at least one reporter has not even seen the film.

While Brando makes many attempts to demystify the huckster role, in one interview he adopts a seeming parody of it. When the interviewer claims that *Morituri* is a great film, Brando exclaims, 'It sure is, pal!' He then adds with a grin, 'All the pictures they make in Hollywood are really great films.' Most spectators would no doubt interpret this statement as hugely sarcastic (particularly those who have seen *Morituri*). However, this moment reveals another key challenge which the presentation of self presents to authenticity. It really is impossible to empirically claim that Brando is in fact being sincere or cynical at this moment. I argue that Brando's overall performance foregrounds the fact that it is a performance. However, the audience can not determine whether Brando's intent is sincere or cynical in each instance. Brando may genuinely believe that all Hollywood pictures, including *Morituri*, are 'great films'. The distinctive tone of voice and gesture Brando uses to say this may in fact be his method of indicating sincerity. No spectator has access to Brando's inner motivations or true opinions, and so we do not know the extent to which the self Brando presents to the camera is strategic or reflexive. Equally, one spectator's assessment of the candour, or authenticity, of his performance may be entirely different to another's. The consequence for the documentary's truth claim is that, while we may agree that elements of Brando's performance appear not to be an authentic

reflection of his genuine beliefs and attitudes, there is no way for the audience to determine or to agree precisely which parts are cynical and by how much.

Brando's physical performance changes significantly when asked about his work with Native Americans (Brando was a committed campaigner and activist for Native American civil rights). Having been previously laughing and joking with the interviewer, Brando instantly stops smiling, closes his eyes, looks down and his voice becomes lower and quieter. 'That's not something I can be flippant about', he remarks. Brando also ceases to rupture the frame or change the subject in this exchange. These alterations in gesture are Brando's way of communicating this attitude to his audience. This is how he indicates a willingness to be serious, or at least to be taken seriously. Brando's performance instantly shifts from 'flippant' to 'serious'. Until now, Brando has foregrounded his cynicism. Now, he appears to wish to be perceived as sincere. His performance loses the reflexive histrionics and inconsistencies which he has previously displayed. For the documentary audience, it is impossible to ascertain if this performance is more authentic or truthful than any other performance Brando has adopted. Brando may wish his claim that he can not be flippant about this subject to be construed as sincere, and his shift in performance style may be his way of communicating this impression. However, his disordered, reflexive performance until this point has already explicitly warned us to be sceptical about the product he is presenting. We can not tell the extent to which this 'serious' presentation of self is cynical or sincere. This scene comes near to the end of the film, after Brando's cynicism has been thoroughly established. This placement may be an indication that the Maysles brothers wished us to ask this question. Had this scene occurred before we had seen the extent to which Brando set out to make himself an elusive subject, we would have less cause to doubt the veracity of this performance.

Meet Marlon Brando shows how a subject can resist and manipulate a documentary film's attempt to represent the self. Brando refuses access to parts of his self and misperforms his role as a celebrity. The abiding question we are left with after the film is; which Marlon Brando did we meet? Did we gain a deep or reliable insight into his true character? Did we learn anything about Brando

which he did not deliberately and consciously present to us? Brando's obtuse performance makes manifest the impossibility of a true or real representation of a documentary subject.

In *Meet Marlon Brando*, Brando foregrounds his obtuseness with a refusal to answer questions and with Brechtian commentary on the roles he and the reporters occupy, but a more subtle performer may be just as cynical without making it explicit. In *Marjoe*, when we observe the effectiveness of Gortner's performance, we must ask if any documentary subject could not do the same. The presentation of self is a method by which the subject of a documentary can direct the manner in which s/he is represented in the documentary. Rather than allowing him/herself to be represented by the documentary apparatus, the subject is, to an extent, representing him/herself in a particular way. The camera can not gain access to the inner workings of the individual it examines. It can therefore never ascertain the degree to which the subject is performing strategically. We present ourselves in every interaction we enter. The presentation of self becomes more focused, however, when the individual is confronted with a documentary camera. The subject, therefore, is wrestling control from the filmmaker. In the following chapter, I will examine the tactics deployed by some filmmakers to regain control of the representation. They adopt games and strategies in order to disrupt or manipulate the subject's presentation of self. In strategic interaction, it is more difficult for the subject to confect a cynical performance, and the filmmaker uses performative strategies of his/her own in order to challenge and pressurise the subject, hoping to expose flaws and inconsistencies in his/her performance.

3. Interaction

In the previous chapter, I argued that *Meet Marlon Brando* demonstrates that a subject who is sufficiently cynical, and is prepared to be perceived as cynical, can control how he is represented by a documentary. The non-interventionist policy of the Maysles brothers prevents the documentary from actively interrogating Brando's cynical performance. The camera simply records Brando's interaction with the unctuous reporters, whom he easily rebuffs. Similarly, in *Marjoe*, Gortner's congregation make no attempt to question the sincerity of his on-stage act, while the filmmakers do not interrogate the sincerity of his off-stage performance. However, in everyday interaction, our audience is much more proactive and reactive. When we present our selves, we must do so in a dialectical relationship with another individual or individuals, who are also seeking to give an impression of their selves in the same encounter. Each act we make elicits a reaction, to which we react in turn. As such, the individual with whom we interact has some influence, consciously and unconsciously, over our own performance. George Goethals argues that 'each type of interpersonal behavior invites or elicits a complementary type [for example] both friendly and unfriendly behaviors invite similarly friendly or unfriendly behavior in return' (2005:96). A documentary filmmaker can therefore put pressure on the subject's presentation of self by instigating an interaction between his/her own self and that of the subject; s/he can serve as 'mentor, participant, prosecutor or provocateur in relation to the social actors recruited in the film' (Bill Nichols, 1991:44). The filmmaker can deploy performative strategies in order to alter or intentionally manipulate the performance which the subject delivers.

This chapter is an adjunct to the previous chapter. I will show how the presentation of self is challenged by the performance of the filmmaker in three documentaries: *When Louis Met...Chris Eubank* (BBC, 2002) and in *Religulous* (Larry Charles, 2008) and *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (Nathan Frankowski, 2008). These documentaries belong to what Nichols terms the 'interactive mode'

(pp.44-56)¹. Whereas in the observational mode the filmmaker ‘cedes control’ (Nichols:38) of the representation, in the interactive mode, the ‘filmmaker need not only be a cinematic, recording eye. He or she might more fully approximate the human sensorium: looking, listening, and speaking as it perceives events and allows for responses’ (44). In this mode, ‘[i]ssues of comprehension and interpretation as a function of physical encounter arise: how do filmmaker and social actor respond to each other; do they react to overtones or implications in the other’s speech; do they see how power and desire flow between them?’ (44). I will seek to address these questions in this chapter.

When Louis Met...Chris Eubank is one episode in a series of eight documentaries which aired on BBC2 in 2002. In this episode, Louis Theroux spends time following former boxing champion Chris Eubank as he pursues his post-boxing career as a businessman and aspiring media star. The documentary is structured around a series of encounters between Theroux and Eubank, set in Eubank’s private and public life. Theroux’s ethnographic style has the potential to precipitate a more sincere performance from his subject. The longer and less formal the encounter, the more likely it is that the subject will become more intimate with the filmmaker, and the more difficult it would be for the subject to maintain a cynical performance. It would be extremely challenging, for example, for Brando to sustain his performance for a matter of days and weeks. Power and control in this type of encounter is more diffuse than in a single, formal interaction. As I argued in the previous chapter, the presentation of self is by no means a consistent and coherent uniform performance. We alter our performance with our mood and situation, our goals shift, sometimes we are unaware of our goals, sometimes we are keenly aware, but may or may not know how to enact them. In an extended

1 Stella Bruzzi critiques Nichols’ four modes schema as variously ‘reductive’, ‘conservative’ and ‘breathhtakingly simplistic’ (2006). While I agree that Nichols’ attempt to impose a convenient genealogy on the modes (1994:43) is unsustainable, I argue that they nonetheless continue to provide a useful foundation for thinking about how documentary filmmakers interact with reality. I would argue that Bruzzi’s ‘performative mode’ (pp.185-216) is a detailed and up-to-date examination of the same tropes which Nichols discusses in his interactive mode. Nichols argues that the interactive mode ‘introduces a sense of partialness, of *situated* presence and *local* knowledge that derive from the actual encounter between filmmaker and other’ (44). Similarly, Bruzzi claims that a performative documentary ‘is the enactment of the notion that a documentary only comes into being as it is performed, that although its factual basis (or document) can pre-date any recording or representation of it, the film itself is necessarily performative because it is given meaning by the interaction between performance and reality’ (186). These modes do not attempt to represent a pre-existing reality. They represent the encounter between filmmaker and reality. I will focus this chapter on the ways in which the interactive filmmaker controls this encounter (and the performance of the subject) in order to confect his argument about the historical world.

interaction, the level of the subject's cynicism and sincerity naturally fluctuates. Under pressure from the filmmaker, it fluctuates even more, it becomes less cogent and cohesive. What is truthful about what is revealed is very much open to interpretation, but it is certainly much more difficult for the subject to be calculating.

Theroux began his career making short films for Michael Moore's *TV Nation* (BBC, Dog Eat Dog Films, 1994-1995) and has gone on to make forty-two documentaries of his own to date. Theroux adopts a distinctive on-screen performance which is markedly similar to that of Nick Broomfield. Stella Bruzzi argues that Broomfield's on-screen persona – the polite, innocuous and vaguely shambolic Englishman – is purposely manufactured in order to lull his subjects into regarding him as benign and nonthreatening (2006:208). As such, his subjects are less on-guard in his presence, and may divulge more sincere information than they would to an individual whom they considered to be a threat. Bruzzi claims that 'Nick Broomfield the documentary filmmaker is not synonymous with 'Nick Broomfield' the charming man with Mickey Mouse earphones and boom who extracts information' from his subjects [...] Nick Broomfield ≠ 'Nick Broomfield', the inverted commas signifying the version of the *auteur* to be found within the films' (208). Similarly, Theroux presents himself as a quizzical innocent who enters situations without appearing to have done any preparation or research. The authenticity of this persona was challenged by one of his subjects, former Conservative MP Ann Widdecombe:

He rather charmingly pretends to be terribly naive, and there was one occasion, not on film, when he seriously tried to persuade me – and this is a guy who read history at Oxford – that he didn't know whether St James's Palace was still standing. I said: 'Louis, you're rumbled'.

The fun part was trying to rumble him, when he was doing his silly act (Julia Stuart, 2002)

'Louis Theroux' is an *ad hoc* character, created specifically for the documentary interaction. Theroux employs this on-screen performance in order to, as he puts it in *When Louis Met...Chris Eubank*, 'get to know the real' Eubank.

In contrast, the presenters of *Religulous* and *Expelled* use a multitude of performative strategies in order to impose their own version of truth, rather than reveal a pre-existing truth. *Religulous* and *Expelled* demonstrate the extent to which a documentary filmmaker can purposely and strategically manipulate the performance of his subject. *Religulous* is presented by Bill Maher, host of the political discussion programmes *Politically Incorrect* (Comedy Central; 1993-1997, ABC, 1997-2002) and *Real Time* (HBO, 2003-). His criticism of religion, and particularly Islam since 9/11, is a central feature of his act. *Expelled* is presented by Ben Stein, the actor, television host and erstwhile speechwriter for Richard Nixon. *Religulous* and *Expelled* explore the influence of religion in and on US society from diametrically opposing perspectives. Maher's goal is to lampoon the followers of all religious faiths; whereas Stein sets out to expose persecution of pro-intelligent design scientists by the scientific academy. These pre-formed prejudices dictate the manner in which they interact with their subjects. Maher and Stein provide positive feedback (Michael Argyle, 1994:pp.27-28) to those who agree with them, but challenge, and sometimes ridicule, dissenters. They ask loaded and leading questions, which limit the responses available to the subject, and make him/her more likely to provide a testimony congruent to the overall argument of the film. Eugene Litwak posits a taxonomy of biased questions, with which an interviewer can direct or distort the information provided by the interviewee (1956). A loaded question 'presents the subject with only one choice, without suggesting the alternative' (182). This form of questioning curbs and controls the performance of the subject. I will focus on the ways in which Maher and Stein impose themselves on their opponents, making them appear weak, confused and ignorant, while placing favourable subjects under no scrutiny, permitting them to present themselves unopposed and thus appear forceful, lucid and informed.

In any interaction, each individual has a particular goal or set of goals which s/he would like to achieve. When we decide how to act in a given situation, 'some sort of maximization of gain will often be involved, often under conditions of uncertainty or risk' (Erving Goffman, 1970:86). The manner in which we direct our behaviour is termed a 'line' by Goffman. 'Face' is the 'positive value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes' (Goffman, 2005:5). In interaction, we seek to produce and maintain a favourable impression of our face when we present

our selves to a group. It is here where our self is judged, valued and positioned. We therefore make rational decisions about how to effect the outcome of a given encounter (i.e., the presentation of self). Both parties in the encounter undertake this process. This becomes particularly interesting when the goals of the two parties are opposing. This is very much the case in 'investigative *verité*' documentaries, such as *Religulous* and *Expelled*, where the 'line of questioning is designed to wrongfoot the interviewee' (John Corner, 1996:165), or in any interaction which involves the filmmaker seeking to acquire information from the subject which the subject would prefer not to reveal, as Theroux attempts to do with Eubank. The filmmaker adopts a line intended to discredit the subject's face. Goffman claims that 'when a person is caught out of face because he had not expected to be thrust into interaction, or because strong feelings have disrupted his expressive mask, the others may protectively turn away from him or his activity for a moment, to give him time to assemble himself' (2005:18). In documentary, this luxury is not usually afforded. In fact, the camera often becomes more intrusive at such moments. The familiar zoom on the face of a subject who has become emotional or tongue-tied is a staple feature of the documentary aesthetic.

Goffman's view of social interaction is that we unconsciously work together in order assist one another in achieving our goals. Goffman argues that a 'we rationale' is likely to emerge, that is, a sense of a single thing that *we* are doing together at the same time' (1966:18). Goffman claims that '[m]uch of the activity occurring during an encounter can be understood as an effort on everyone's part to get through the occasion and all the unanticipated and unintentional events that can cast participants in an undesirable light, without disrupting the relationships of the participants' (2005:41). Michael Argyle claims that '[f]or anything approaching social interaction to occur there must be a considerable amount of 'coordination', 'meshing' or 'synchronising' of the two patterns of behaviour' (1969:199). However, the presenters of the three documentaries which I wish to examine do not operate to protect the cohesion and stability of the encounter. The filmmakers intentionally set up an adversarial interaction in order to prevent the subject from having a line prepared and seek to interrogate, if not discredit, the face the subject would wish for him/herself. Theroux, in particular, induces what Anselm Strauss terms 'problematic situations' (1997:50). This is where a 'person trying to define the situation is necessarily grappling also with motivational problems. You are forced to ask, by the very ambiguity

of the situation, what do those acts mean? Why did those others perform them?' (50). Theroux plays with proxemics and power relations. Sometimes he is friendly and informal, at others he is aggressive and persistent. He mixes trivial questions with disarmingly personal and intrusive questions.

The interaction between filmmaker and subject in an adversarial interaction becomes a game of strategy. The subject will attempt to conceal unfavourable information, reveal or fabricate favourable information and convince the filmmaker that s/he is revealing all information available to him/her. Goffman argues that

[j]ust as it can be assumed that it is in the interests of the observer to acquire information from a subject, so it is in the interests of the subject to appreciate that this is occurring and to control and manage the information the observer obtains [...] it can be assumed that the subject can achieve this end by means of a special capacity – the capacity to inhibit and fabricate expression (1970:10).

The filmmaker's purpose is to encourage or dupe the subject into revealing all the information which is germane to the documentary's argument, whether the subject would prefer to reveal this or not.

This dynamic can be most clearly observed in a face-to-face interview, where the filmmaker acts as interrogator in order to withdraw information from the subject. Much of *Religulous* and *Expelled* are composed of these interactions. The interviewer has a set of questions prepared, and the subject is compelled to respond. In this type of interaction, failure or refusal to respond will cast the interviewee as obtuse and possibly guilty. For example, Robert McNamara's refusal to answer Errol Morris' questions at the end of *The Fog of War* (2007) is described as 'shaming [and] shameful' by Bruzzi (2006:197). Nichols argues that 'interviews are a form of hierarchical discourse deriving from unequal distribution of power' (47). The interviewer/filmmaker is the dominant party. We look to him/her as the voice of authority and arbiter of authenticity. Philip Bell and Theo van Leeuwen argue that 'interviewers can, to some extent, plan their speech in advance. Hence they are likely to come across as the more fluent and articulate speakers' (1994:10). This is significant when put next to Goffman's claim that, '[i]n aggressive interchanges the winner not only succeeds in introducing

information favorable to himself and unfavorable to the others, but also demonstrates that as interactor he can handle himself better than his adversaries' (2005:25). The average person may not be quite as confident and comfortable as a professional interactor and will thus appear weak and inarticulate by comparison. As experienced television personalities and actors, Bill Maher (*Religulous*) and Ben Stein (*Expelled*) possess well-developed presentational and rhetorical skills, which allow them to dominate their opponents. Maher in particular, who began his career as a stand-up comedian, uses his acerbic wit and polished delivery to exert power over his less verbally dexterous subjects. The game of information control is therefore weighted in favour of the professional filmmaker's objective to extract information, over the amateur subject's aim to withhold information.

When Louis Met...Chris Eubank is structured around more free-form and spontaneous conversations. Here, the power dynamic shifts somewhat. Nichols argues that '[c]onversation is at the boundary of institutional control [...] Conversations draw our attention to the byplay and manoeuvring, along a gradient of power, between the filmmaker and subject' (1991:51). The conversations which Theroux and Eubank have are much more fluid and ludic than a formalised interview. They are instigated by spontaneous occurrences; from Eubank's wardrobe on a particular day to Theroux's timekeeping. The filmmaker is less in control of this type of encounter. In a one-on-one interview, power flows in one direction, from the interviewer to the respondent. In a conversation, the subject can change the direction of conversation or introduce subjects of his/her own. The benefit of conversations for the filmmaker is that their unpredictability and spontaneity place the subject in a situation for which s/he may not have a performance prepared. Bell and van Leeuwen critique the 'Romantic belief that what people say spontaneously is more truthful than what they say after preparation and planning' (17). Conversations may not be more truthful, but they are surely less strategic. Conversations also relieve the pressure on the subject, which may encourage him/her to be more open with the filmmaker.

The question raised by the interaction between filmmaker and documentary subject is: what truths can be revealed by the filmmaker's intervention? As I argued in the previous chapter, every subject who encounters a documentary camera will inevitably adopt a cynical performance, to one

degree or another and at certain points in the interaction. The interactive filmmaker disrupts the subject's presentation of self, potentially preventing him/her from confecting and delivering a calculating, cynical performance. Unable to be cynical, the subject may become more sincere by default. I do not wish to argue that if the filmmaker penetrates a particular cynical performance, s/he will magically encounter a sincere self; there is almost certainly no such thing as a sincere self, and certainly not one which could be reliably discerned. I merely wish to highlight that the surface performance – the strategic, intentionally cynical performance – can be breached.

When Louis Met...Chris Eubank (BBC, 2002)

When Louis Met...Chris Eubank begins with Theroux driving to Eubank's house, introducing his subject, and his own interest in him, in voice-over. Theroux describes Eubank as 'the ex-World champion boxer and modern-day dandy' and claims that 'I was curious about his unusual persona'. This introduction functions as a lens through which we will view Eubank's performance for the rest of the film. Theroux's inaugural assessment of Eubank's image has inherent authority: Theroux is the 'voice-of-God; Eubank is merely the subject. This is an indication that the power balance is weighted in Theroux's favour. He has the filmmaking apparatus at his disposal. No matter how the proceeding encounter develops, Theroux will ultimately provide the creative treatment. Theroux then promises to spend some time 'getting to know the real' Eubank. We therefore read Theroux's performance as his attempt to achieve this. To do so, he will need to penetrate elements of Eubank's performance which he believes to be cynical. 'Believes' is a key word: just like the documentary spectator, Theroux has no means to definitively claim that Eubank is being sincere or cynical at any point in the interaction. Whether Eubank presents his 'real' self, or whether Theroux successfully reveals Eubank's real self can only be surmised.

Upon arrival, Theroux finds Eubank waiting for him on the street, waving animatedly. Eubank appears keen to enter this encounter. Theroux immediately raises his fists and begins jabbing away at Eubank, playfully engaging with Eubank on his terms. However, Eubank refuses to reciprocate, and stands stiffly in front of Theroux, holding up his hands in refusal. Undeterred, Theroux begins to strike Eubank lightly upon his upraised hands. Theroux then grabs Eubank's large hands and shows them off to the camera, comparing them favourably to his own. Theroux thus commences the interaction by physically dominating Eubank, although as he does so he highlights Eubank's physical prowess, and its superiority to his own. This is the first illustration of the way in which Theroux plays with the power relationship between himself and Eubank. Eubank then complains that Theroux is late, and the two have a brief argument about Theroux's tardiness. This is an incipient indication of friction between the two, a brief sparring for control of the terms of the encounter. Theroux abruptly walks toward Eubank's gate, 'Can we come in?' he asks, then walks through the gate ahead of Eubank. The two then have a further argument after Theroux asks to see Eubank's second house. Eubank declines, claiming that it is being renovated and it will 'let down appearances'. Despite Theroux's repeated entreaties, Eubank refuses to relent. He reasserts some control over who is in command of this encounter.

The central theme of this documentary is this struggle for power between Theroux and Eubank. In a 'focused interaction' such as this (Goffman, 1966:7), the party who is most successful in controlling the flow of information will prevail. As a documentary subject, Eubank's objective is to present himself in a favourable way; as a documentary filmmaker, Theroux's objective is to scrutinise his subject's performance. Theroux is clearly in control for most of the interaction, but he occasionally relinquishes some power to Eubank at key moments. One way in which Theroux achieves this is by complicating the spatial environs of the interaction. In one scene, Theroux and Eubank stand on the driveway as Theroux asks a number of probing questions regarding Eubank's relationship with his wife, Karron. While Eubank is thoughtfully answering one question, Theroux suddenly walks away without warning and inspects Eubank's garage. This is a common move for Theroux. It expands the space of the encounter. The interaction becomes less focused and intense, less confrontational. This makes the nature of the encounter more difficult to define for the subject. It also makes the power

relationship between Theroux and Eubank less clearly defined. Theroux's initial question puts pressure on Eubank. By abruptly withdrawing, however, Theroux relieves some of the pressure. This move creates a safety-valve. As such, Eubank may not know quite the most strategic way to act in Theroux's presence. Eubank may consider Theroux to be an adversary, from whom it is advisable to conceal information, or he may feel it necessary to divulge more compelling information in the future in order to retain Theroux's attention and prevent him from wandering off in the middle of the conversation.

Throughout the film, Theroux's rapport with Eubank is fluid and complex. Its parameters are unclear and shifting. In the early stages of the encounter, Eubank is extremely defensive. He criticises Theroux's methods and questions his motives, repeatedly admonishing him for being 'tabloid'. In one exchange, Theroux tells Eubank that he can not understand why he put himself through the ordeal of fighting. The camera zooms in on Eubank, who bows his head and utters, 'I'm constantly disappointed with your intellect'. 'Why?' asks Theroux and Eubank replies, 'Because I'm sure either you're doing it for tabloid or you're just really, really...', at which point Theroux interrupts, 'All I meant was, what stops you from throwing in the towel'. Clearly, their appraisal of one another, of the nature and purpose of the encounter, is asymmetrical. They do not seem able to relate. This is exacerbated by Theroux, who obstructs the interaction from running smoothly. Theroux's questioning is often provocative. On his first morning with the family, Theroux states to Eubank, 'Karron seems lovely, by the way. I don't know how she puts up with you, though'. He then suggests that Eubank is 'a bit like a child'. At such an early stage in their interaction, this seems a speculative and daring appraisal to put to Eubank. In another conversation, Theroux remarks, 'I don't know why you say you're an ordinary guy', to which Eubank responds, 'I am. You know, when you take into consideration...to say something like that is to completely miss the point'. Theroux then states in voice-over, 'I could tell that getting to know Chris was going to be a challenge'. Clearly, his conception of 'getting to know Chris is entirely on his own terms, and involves provoking his subject.

Theroux places Eubank under intense and persistent scrutiny when he believes that Eubank is being cynical. One such occasion is an exchange they have in the back of a car on the way to one of

Eubank's television appearances. Theroux reveals in voice-over that Eubank had been up until late the previous night drinking champagne. However, when he puts this to Eubank, Eubank denies the allegation, and in fact denies ever drinking alcohol. Theroux insists that he knows this to be untrue, claiming that he personally saw Eubank's bar bill. After more verbal sparring, it becomes clear that Eubank is intentionally withholding information. Although Eubank refuses to relent, he obliquely suggests that, if he were withholding information, it would not be to protect his own image, but only to prevent himself from having a negative influence on 'the children' (throughout the documentary, Eubank insists that his primary goal is to present himself as a role model for 'the children'). Theroux, however, is very persistent on this issue, fiercely determined to disrupt Eubank's performance and inform us that Eubank is not presenting himself in a truthful manner. In the proceeding scene, Eubank meets a female fan in the street and, as she and Eubank talk, Theroux interjects and warns her - 'Don't talk to him, he's a heavy drinker'. Theroux is being facetious as a means to enforce his point; to inform Eubank, and us, that he is not fooled by Eubank's denials, and using humour to exert power over his subject (a staple tactic of Bill Maher's, as I will discuss on pages 73-74).

In a subsequent sequence on a train, Theroux continues to grill Eubank over his willingness to conceal information. Theroux challenges Eubank on his apparent conception of reality; 'You think that, as long as you don't do it on TV, you haven't really done it'. This statement reveals the fundamental problem faced by the documentary filmmaker: Theroux's purpose is to *represent* reality, but he can only represent what is revealed to him. The spectator's access to Eubank is limited to what we can see on-screen. If Eubank does not commit the act on-screen, we do not know if he has 'done it' or not. Theroux can not expose information which Eubank withholds, but he can expose the fact that Eubank is withholding information. Theroux then asks Eubank if he takes drugs, to which Eubank responds, 'No, and if I did, I wouldn't tell you'. This is the same response Eubank provided to the accusation that he drinks alcohol, and by now we should probably be sceptical about his wording. However, we have no way to judge Eubank's sincerity here, due to his confessed cynicism. While Theroux attempts to pierce Eubank's manifestly cynical performance, he can not reveal any definitively sincere information. This conversation is shot from a distance, making it appear as though it is an overheard exchange. Theroux has been separated from his filmmaking apparatus, and the

scene appears a mundane encounter between two men. Theroux's appeal for sincerity seems to be for himself, rather than for the documentary. As they spend more time together, and build a growing rapport, Theroux's appeal may become more exigent. At one point, Theroux asks, 'How do you think the viewer will be looking at this?' to which Eubank responds, 'How do you look at me?' Theroux, rather than the camera, has become the primary audience for Eubank. Theroux replies, 'I like you'. In the following scene, Eubank takes Theroux's hand as they cross a busy road. Theroux, however, is clearly uncomfortable with this level of intimacy and pulls away at the other side. Perhaps Theroux's profession of approval was merely a cynical ploy to achieve intimacy with his subject.

Much of the documentary concentrates on the relationship between Eubank and his wife. Karron is mostly represented as impossibly harried figure glimpsed rushing from one room to another, hailed by the squeals of unseen children. Theroux is extremely sympathetic toward Karron when she is both on- and off-screen, while he is usually withering toward Eubank. Part of the dynamic Theroux creates with Karron is designed to undermine Eubank. On his first meeting with Karron, Theroux jokes, 'Thanks for letting Chris spend time with us'. While this appears ingratiating toward her, it also demeans Eubank somewhat. Theroux constructs himself and Karron as jokers at Eubank's expense, a collusion he will enforce a number of times throughout the film. Later in the interaction, Theroux interrogates Eubank on what he feels his role as a husband and father should be. This conversation takes place at the foot of the stairs, a pathway through which Karron hustles back and forth as she bathes the children. Eubank's inertia in opposition to Karron's activity is significant. Theroux challenges Eubank on the fact that he is not helping, remarking, 'I'm surprised you're not even doing it to make yourself look good for us' (neglecting the fact that his questioning is preventing Eubank from helping). Eubank eventually admits, after repeated cross-examination, that his 'fifty percent' of the relationship is to earn the money. Bathing the children is 'mummy's work'. In one of her passes-by, Theroux puts this proposition to Karron, which provokes an argument between herself and Eubank. This continues later, with the three of them sitting at the dining room table. As Karron and Eubank bicker, Theroux sits silently between them, the instigator of the confrontation who now withdraws and observes.

Theroux also attempts to undermine Eubank in a scene with his agent, Mary. She informs Eubank that he has been named 'Rear of the Year' by *The Sun* newspaper, to which Eubank responds with contempt. Theroux, however, tries to cajole Eubank into taking part, and establishes a further collusion with Mary. Theroux asks her, 'He takes this stuff so seriously, doesn't he?' and later asks, 'Is he always like this?', to which Eubank interjects, 'Always like what?' Theroux responds, 'Mary knows what I mean', and Mary nods her head. Throughout this scene, Eubank sits between Mary and Theroux, with Theroux standing up. As the camera pans back and forth – Mary and Theroux doing much of the talking, but pausing to linger on Eubank for his reactions – Eubank looks hemmed in, particularly by Theroux, who towers over him. As in the scenes with Karron, Theroux is isolating Eubank from his team. This prevents Eubank looking to them for protective measures against Theroux's probing. Theroux assumes power and distributes it amongst the group, leaving Eubank with none. Eubank is under scrutiny and attack from all sides – his wife, his agent, Theroux and the documentary camera. This is a significant victory for Theroux. Eubank, after all, made his living as a hugely successful prize fighter and is presumably unaccustomed to being dominated. Discomfited and confused, it becomes ever more difficult for Eubank to assume control of the interaction, and the manner in which he is represented.

One sequence focuses on Eubank's appearance on the BBC panel show *They Think it's all Over*. Until now, Eubank has been mainly depicted in his own home, while Theroux has been his guest. Now, however, Eubank is out of his element. This is more Theroux's turf. As they wait backstage, Eubank refuses to undress in front of the camera in order to iron his clothes, which, as Theroux points out, he was willing to do at home. Eubank is clearly not comfortable in this environment. The documentary then shows a series of clips from the programme, in which Eubank was mercilessly mocked by the other panellists. After the recording, an apparently upset Eubank asks Theroux how he came across. Theroux has progressed from intrusive, tabloid hound, to confidant. Theroux offers Eubank advice on how best to conduct himself in the glare of the media. Theroux suggests that 'Maybe you're taking the role model thing too seriously'. This appears to be genuine advice, and is in opposition to his frequent attempts to undermine and disorder Eubank. The fact that

Eubank asks Theroux for advice indicates once more that Theroux is in control of the encounter, while Theroux's offer of guidance may simply be one more ploy to obtain intimacy with Eubank.

In the penultimate scene, Theroux joins Eubank in the boxing ring for a sparring session. Here, Eubank assumes total control of the encounter. This is accentuated by the fact that Eubank's old trainers are in attendance, and Eubank at last has some allies. They are full of praise for Eubank, and ridicule Theroux's ineptitude in every aspect of this 'front'. As his gloves are put on, Theroux repeatedly iterates his trepidation about the contest. Theroux then performs a series of sclerotic callisthenics in the centre of the ring, while Eubank dances nimbly around him, dominating the space and Theroux. They begin to spar, and Eubank demands that Theroux hit him. After repeated entreaties, Theroux takes a couple of pusillanimous swipes, before finally satisfying Eubank that he has struck him hard enough. Eubank embraces this opportunity to demonstrate his toughness and exploits the forum where he can demonstrate superiority to Theroux, who always has the edge in verbal exchanges. Theroux has no skills here. He is risibly impotent. At one point, Theroux announces to Eubank, 'If you hit me again, I'll get out of the ring'. The extent to which Theroux is 'playing up' here is unclear, but he is willing to concede his own inadequacy. Theroux is clearly prepared to humiliate himself in order to recalibrate and complicate the power relationship between himself and his subject.

The timing of this scene is significant. Theroux waits until the end of the film to allow Eubank to assume control. Had this scene been at the beginning of the documentary, we would have viewed the subsequent interactions between Theroux and Eubank quite differently. The power relationship between the two men may have appeared more equal. As it is, we see how completely Theroux dominates Eubank throughout the film. This suggests that the game of information control between the two men is weighted in favour of Theroux's objective to reveal Eubank's 'real' self. Where Theroux is in control, he appears to be achieving his goal. In this (physical) sparring session, there is also an element of Theroux exculpating himself for his passive/aggressive bullying of Eubank throughout the film. Having watched Theroux obligingly cede control in this way, we may be more sympathetic toward him, and may decide to tune in next week.

***Religulous* (Larry Charles, 2008) and *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (Nathan Frankowski, 2008)**

Unlike Theroux, Bill Maher and Ben Stein make no attempt to reveal the ‘real’ self of their subjects. Instead, they attempt to direct and manipulate the performances of their subjects to suit their own ends. *Religulous* and *Expelled* are structured in a similar fashion, with each presenter travelling through the US, encountering a series of subjects in both formal and informal interviews. Both Maher and Stein enter each interaction with a ready-made argument, which shapes the way in which they conduct their interactions. *Religulous* sets out to expose the irrationality and credulity of various religious devotees. *Expelled* purports to explore the persecution of religious followers in and by the scientific community.

Maher and Stein’s domination of their subjects is assisted by the documentary apparatus. As in all documentaries, the interaction is not only between subject and filmmaker, but also between subject and filmmaking apparatus. In both *Religulous* and *Expelled*, the framing of the interactions supports their presenters, and disparages their opponents. Throughout *Religulous*, Maher is afforded many opportunities to expound his own arguments on religion, without challenge. His own voice saturates the text. Stein’s voice is not as pervasive in *Expelled*, but it is equally dominant. While Stein conducts his interviews, he sometimes comments on important revelations in voice-over. This makes him appear omniscient, and permits him a critical distance from the *sturm* and *drang* of the individual interactions. Maher and Stein’s privileged status in their respective texts allows them the luxury to reconsider and cogitate on the interactions in which they participate, an opportunity not afforded to their subjects. *Religulous* and *Expelled* deploy an identical tactic: after their respective presenters deliver a sapient point or ask a probing question, the frame pauses momentarily on a close-up of the subject’s face, and then abruptly cuts away, without giving the subject an opportunity to respond. The

subject is seemingly rendered dumb by the presenter's sagacity. In each instance, it is perfectly possible that the subject may simply be pausing to draw breath, or preparing a devastatingly lucid argument which we never hear, but the film does not show us either way. The spectator has no way to determine the duration of the ellipsis, and no access to the information contained within this missing piece of footage.

Religulous begins with Maher setting the stakes for his debate. Standing on waste-ground in Megiddo, Israel - the spot which some Christians believe will be the site of the rapture - Maher offers a brief argument on the death-worship inherent to religion's eschatology, which he claims could be a possible cause of nuclear war. This correlation of religion to the annihilation of humanity cuts to a sequence of Maher driving through America, and delivering his own view on religious belief. Maher asserts, 'I certainly, honestly, believe that religion is detrimental to the progress of humanity'. Having laid out his tendentious creed, Maher then claims that the purpose of the film is to discover what makes religion appealing to its followers; 'I have to find out. I have to try,' he promises, as 'The Seeker', by The Who plays on the soundtrack. This sequence foregrounds Maher's perspective, but posits the text as an investigation. Maher, however, does not approach his subjects in the spirit of discovery, but rather sets out to refute and lampoon them.

Expelled initially investigates the cases of scientists who have been persecuted by the scientific academy for professing a belief in intelligent design. The documentary then goes on to undertake a philippic against 'Darwinism', featuring a number of subjects who challenge the efficacy of the theory of evolution and criticise its apparent consequences. In Stein's opening spiel, a speech in a lecture theatre - a stage which confers intrinsic authority - Stein sets out his own doctrine. Stein expresses his fear that freedom of thought and inquiry is being suppressed by arrogance and intolerance in the scientific community. However, the opening titles of *Expelled* reveal (in a rather crass manner) that this documentary also does not intend to approach its content in a balanced and neutral fashion. This sequence features archival footage of Nazis erecting walls and razor wire, and Nazi officers in war rooms, poring over plans and models. *Expelled* regards its subject matter as a direct confrontation between two poles and Stein's opening speech, along with this imagery, assures

us on which side it resides, and would like its audience to reside. Stein will later visit the site of Auschwitz in order to make the argument that the unfettered progress of science inevitably leads here. Like Maher, as the star of the documentary, Stein's voice has greater authority than any other subject. All respondents are naturally judged on their congruence to his opinion. Inspecting the gas chambers, Stein expresses an opinion of science which is at the extreme end of any evaluative spectrum conceivable (and, to put it mildly, qualifies somewhat as a breach of taste). He implicates all scientists - all dissenting voices in the film - in the Holocaust.

Religulous begins with a charged confrontation between Maher and a group of truckers in an *ad hoc* roadside chapel. Throughout most of the scene, Maher stand on the dais, his arm resting on the lectern. His elevated status - accentuated by the fact that the camera is often set at a low angle -, relaxed posture and position at the head of the room, give Maher symbolic power. He dominates the men, who sit upright on the chairs, as they would during a sermon. It is clear that Maher is not there to have a balanced conversation with the men, but rather to impose his view upon them. Maher has an argument with one of the men over Pascal's Wager. The man, a former Satanist preacher, suggests that being Christian is a shrewd way of hedging one's bets against the uncertainty of God's existence: should God not exist, there is nothing to lose by acting as a Christian; should God exist, however, one would be punished for not being Christian. Maher objects, slapping the lectern and pointing at the man, 'If your being good is just to save your ass, that's not a good reason and you know that'. As the man begins to counter, the film cuts to a later sequence of Maher and Charles sitting in the car, laughing and mocking the cynicism of the man's argument. We then cut back to the chapel and the scene ends with Maher spontaneously taking up a position behind the lectern and slamming his hand down upon it as he bellows, 'I don't know - that's what I preach. I preach the gospel of 'I don't know'', this cuts back to Maher continuing in the car, 'That's what I'm promoting. That's my product'. This claim to uncertainty is not consistent with Maher's performance. His bellicosity and arrogance in this scene demonstrates that he will not permit any argument contrary to his own position to enter the documentary without censuring it. Maher's dominance of the men in this opening sequence, spatially and discursively, and the use of editing to silence or discredit the men, gives an incipient indication of how Charles and Maher intend to utilise their subjects in the text. Maher uses his discursive skills and

mordant wit to browbeat subjects who disagree with his own view. Charles, meanwhile, uses the framing of the text to enforce Maher's dominance. If the truth claim is situated in this discrete encounter, religion is represented as irrational and feeble, while anti-theism is powerful and convincing.

Maher then interviews a preacher, John Westgott, who believes homosexuality to be curable, claiming to have been 'cured' himself. The interview takes place in Westgott's office. He sits exaggeratedly slumped behind his desk, seemingly at home and at ease, while Maher sits more upright with a clipboard, looking alert and professional. Maher instantly attempts to discomfit Westgott, outlining the fact that Westgott used to be gay, his wife was a lesbian, and they now have three children - 'and I guess the jury's out on them', Maher speculates with a smirk. Maher's opening joke calibrates the tone of the interaction. It immediately informs Westgott that this will be adversarial. This may well have caught Westgott off-guard, as he may not have been prepared for such a no-holds-barred confrontation. The fixing and arranging which goes on in order to secure suitable interviewees, locations and times is usually concealed from the documentary spectator. As such, it is unclear as to what prior impression Westgott may have formed of the purpose of the documentary. We can not therefore speculate as to what strategy he may have prepared for the interview. Maher, as the instigator and moderator of the interaction, comes prepared for a confrontation. Where there is asymmetrical information between filmmaker and subject as to the definition of the interaction, the subject will not know what information it would be felicitous to conceal or reveal. If an individual enters an interaction expecting a cordial exchange, only to be surprised by an aggressive and personal attack or calumny, it may disorder the individual's performance. S/he will not have prepared a suitable line to protect his/her ideal face, and so may not be able to manufacture an effective cynical performance. This poses an ethical dilemma: is it in fact fair to ambush an individual in the pursuit of authenticity?

In contrast to *Religulous*, the majority of *Expelled's* subjects are portrayed sympathetically by the text. Stein is extremely propitiatory toward intelligent design apologists featured in the text. Stein's first encounter is with Richard Sternberg, an evolutionary biologist who was released by the

Smithsonian institute, allegedly for publishing a paper which proposed intelligent design as the origin of life². Stein meets up with Sternberg in front of the US Capitol. The iconography of the US political system, used throughout *Expelled*, sets the context for this encounter. Stein's opening speech is overlaid with shots of the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument as Stein insists that America is 'about freedom' (Stein utters the word 'freedom' a total of thirteen times in fifty-five seconds). All subsequent evocations of US iconography therefore connote freedom within the text's framework. Stein and Sternberg shake hands - establishing the two men as equals - and Sternberg gives Stein a tour around the grounds of the Smithsonian, positioning the two men in the centre of this venerated institution of science and learning. Sternberg shows off the building to Stein and points out the department where he was employed. Stein states, 'Now you're not there any more because you were a bad boy', to which Sternberg replies, 'No, I'm not. I was exiled'. Stein then insists, 'You were a bad boy. You questioned the powers that be'. Stein immediately signals his sympathy with Sternberg, before we have had the opportunity to hear his testimony or adjudicate his performance ourselves. In his initial introduction to Sternberg's case, Stein's wording – 'His life was nearly ruined when he strayed from the party line' – reiterates the text's claim that the scientific community is fascistic, and invites sympathy from the spectator over Sternberg's supposed opprobrium.

The two then have a formal interview, which is conducted on a sunny rooftop. The US Capitol sits behind Sternberg and a large US flag flies in the breeze behind Stein. Judy Gahagan notes that the 'environment plays some role in modulating our emotional responses to other people' (1984:43), or, as Bill Nichols more sonorously puts it, 'each choice of spatio-temporal configuration between filmmaker and interviewee carries implications and a potential political charge, an ideological valence' (1991:51). In *Expelled*, pro-intelligent design subjects are always interviewed outdoors, bathed in natural light. Anti-intelligent design subjects are always interviewed in dark, cluttered offices. Sternberg gives an account of the circumstances of his dismissal, and his general opinion on the way in which the scientific community persecutes nonconformists. Stein does not challenge any

2 John Rennie and Steve Mirsky dissect in detail the claims made by *Expelled* (2008). My purpose is simply to demonstrate how Stein uses performance as a means to facilitate the text's propagandistic objectives.

statement made by Sternberg and provides constant positive feedback; finishing Sternberg's sentences, clarifying some of his statements and repeating key words. When Sternberg claims that 'People were so upset that you could see they had a physical emotional [*sic*] reaction', Stein responds, 'Wow', raising his eyebrows and opening his eyes wide. Sternberg later asserts that 'I was viewed as an intellectual terrorist'. '*Terrorist?*', exclaims Stein, implicitly accepting Sternberg's – unquestionably prejudiced – account as authentic. Stein's performance assumes that Sternberg is utterly sincere. Stein does not attempt to disrupt Sternberg's self-presentation, or to extract information from him which is not immediately forthcoming.

While Stein does not subject assenting voices to scrutiny, he is more confrontational with dissenting voices. His next interaction is with Michael Shermer, the head of the Skeptics Society. Stein challenges Shermer on his assertions in a way which he did not with Sternberg. Here, Stein acts as an advocate for Sternberg, simultaneously legitimating Sternberg's grievance, and challenging Shermer. Stein forces Shermer to justify and explain himself in a way which he did not with Sternberg. The implicit message is that Shermer has something to justify which Sternberg does not. Stein furrows his brow as he forms questions to Shermer, and frowns at some of his responses. At the end of the interview, Stein asks Shermer if it is appropriate for an academic to be dismissed for simply discussing intelligent design. Shermer claims to know of no case where this has happened. The film then immediately cuts to tell the story of Caroline Crocker, who is presented as just such a case. The evocation of the Crocker case discredits Shermer, making him appear ignorant, and thus unreliable. His performance has been neutered by the framing of the text. This cut tells us not to trust Shermer's testimony, no matter how convincing we may have found his performance.

Crocker, unlike Shermer, is presented in testimony, with Stein not present. This is also true of the following two subjects, who, the text claims, were also victimised for expressing sympathy toward intelligent design. Crocker makes a number of ambiguous, but bold statements. She claims that she was disciplined for 'merely mentioning intelligent design' in class, on 'a couple of slides'. The lack of an interactive filmmaker here does not allow the text to clarify in what context and to what end Crocker used these slides, and therefore to judge whether she was indeed guilty of impropriety.

Crocker goes on to claim that she has since been unable to find employment, and states conclusively that this is because the scientific community has 'blacklisted' her, due to her belief in intelligent design. Again, this statement goes untested. With no interaction, Crocker can present herself entirely in a manner of her choosing. The fact that Stein chooses not to scrutinise her performance infers that she is being sincere and reliable.

Like Stein, Maher adjusts his performance for assenting voices. Maher provides positive feedback to those who agree with him. He nods his head while they speak, laughs at their jokes, finishes their sentences and uses reinforcing and encouraging terms, such as 'Yes', 'Right', and 'Uh-huh'. Maher's unction toward cohorts becomes most alarming when he interviews the notorious Dutch fascist Geert Wilders. As Wilders claims that Islam is intent on taking over the world, Maher commences nodding his head and uttering 'Right, right', before Wilders can complete his first sentence. This interview takes place on the mezzanine – in itself a symbolic position, implying panoramic vision – of The Hague, which esteems all of the authority of the Dutch Parliament and the world court of human rights. So long as his subject agrees with his own argument, Maher will not scrutinise him/her.

The climatic moment of *Expelled* is a face-to-face interaction between Stein and evolutionary biologist and noted atheist Richard Dawkins. This is framed in the manner of a prize fight, with an extended sequence of the two men preparing themselves for the face-off. Stein is depicted driving through London in a black taxi, while Dawkins is shown having make-up applied and his hair brushed. The power dynamic this creates is clear: Stein has come to Dawkins' turf. While he appears as a fish-out-of-water and arrives directly at the interview, seemingly unprepared, Dawkins appears primed, as well as vain and possibly effeminate. When the interview begins, the two face across a large table. The lighting is once again very low, Dawkins in particular is dramatically lit, his face half in shadow. Stein is much more probing with Dawkins than with any other subject. He asks a cascade of questions, challenging Dawkins on nearly every assertion he makes. At one point he demands of Dawkins, 'You're a scientist, what's your data?' Stein does not pose this question to any of the other (pro-intelligent design) scientists in *Expelled*. Stein tries to force Dawkins into admitting that there

may in fact be an intelligent designer, which Dawkins concedes to be an ontological possibility. Stein comments on this revelation in voice-over, framing it as a momentous declaration from one of the 'Darwinists' modern architects'. Stein's reaction structures this statement by Dawkins as though he has revealed damaging information, despite the fact that Dawkins is quite forthcoming with this claim, and it does nothing to discredit the crux of his argument. Dawkins claims that his scepticism is based on the extremely low probability of the existence of a God or Gods. Stein seizes upon this, and repeatedly attempts to force Dawkins into providing an exact figure for the probability of God's existence. Dawkins' subsequent bumbling, stymied attempt to answer Stein's question makes him appear indecisive and inarticulate. Eventually, Dawkins makes an extremely unscientific attempt to guess at a proposition for which he has no data. Stein's interrogatory style has eventually been successful in disordering Dawkins' composure and thereby discrediting his authority. Like Maher, Stein is able to manipulate and twist his subjects to his own ends.

In this chapter, I attempted to demonstrate the ways in which interactive filmmakers challenge their subjects' presentation of self. Theroux, Maher and Stein assume that, unchallenged, their subjects will not present their sincere selves to the camera (in the case of *Religulous* and *Expelled*, this applies only to subjects who disagree with Maher and Stein). In *When Louis Met...Chris Eubank*, Theroux uses his own presence to scrutinise and disrupt his subject's presentation of self. Over the course of an extended and fluid interaction, he gains intimacy, plays with proxemics and plays with power relationships. This makes it difficult for his subject to define the situation and therefore concoct a suitable performance. When a subject can not be cynical, Theroux infers that s/he will be more sincere; hence his promise to 'get to know the real' Eubank. *Religulous* and *Expelled* are extreme examples of the way in which the performance of subjects can be twisted, configured and aimed by the filmmaker. Maher's sarcasm subordinates his subjects and ridicules them. Maher claims to be on an interactive voyage of discovery, when he is in fact determined to enforce his own viewpoint. Stein's positive feedback and leading questions permit his subjects to freely present themselves as

reliable and plausible. He gives the appearance of exposing his subjects to scrutiny, when in fact he is supporting them. Interactive performance is a power struggle between filmmaker and subject, with each vying for control of the flow of information presented to the camera. As ever in documentary, the source of the information sought by the text is contained in the subject's performance. In these documentaries, the filmmakers remove agency from the subject. The subject's performance, therefore, is less calculating. In *Marjoe* and *Meet Marlon Brando*, the intentionally cynical performances of Gortner and Brando are a barrier to the documentary's representation. They use performance as a means to keep their audiences at a distance. Interactive documentaries attempt to breach this barrier, using the performative techniques of the filmmaker.

4. Reenactments

In this chapter, I will explore performance in documentary reenactments, focusing on two drama-documentaries which engage with 9/11 and the subsequent 'War on Terror': *The Road to Guantanamo* (Michael Winterbottom, and Matt Whitecross 2006) and *United 93* (Paul Greengrass, 2006).

Documentary filmmakers use reenactments to 'fill in the blanks' left by an absence or lack of primary recorded material (John Corner, 1996:31). In *The Road to Guantanamo* and *United 93*, there were no cameras present for the events depicted and so we have no access to the actual performances of the subjects depicted. The original subject in action is lost to us. A reenactment actor attempts to (re)animate the absent subject. Bill Nichols argues that '[w]hen an actor reincarnates a historical personage, the actor's very presence testifies to a gap between the text and the life to which it refers' (1991:219). This gap is both temporal and corporeal. A reenactment retains a relationship to a real, past event, but it must be recognised as a new, present object. This is signified in the body of the actor, which stands in for the body of the real (absent) person. The "extra" body of the actor mediates our access to the historical event; techniques of lighting, composition, costume, décor, *mise-en-scène*, and acting style offer an alternative mode of entry and present a different, sometimes conflicting set of criteria of authenticity for the viewer' (Nichols:250). In a reenactment, actuality is not only mediated by the filmmaker, but also by the actor. Performance in reenactments brings to the fore the inherent and unresolved tension encapsulated by Grierson's infamous mission statement, 'the creative treatment of actuality' (Forsyth Hardy, 1979:11). In reenacting the absent figure, the actor, like any dramatic actor, must use his/her own consciousness to make performance choices, and must use his/her physical gestures and inflections to present the material. This has ideological and cultural valences, along with physical limitations and connotations. I will examine four issues raised by the reenactment performances in *The Road to Guntanamo* and *United 93*: historiography; *gest* - that is, physical attitude, tone of voice and facial expression; absence/desire; and fantasy.

The Road to Guantanamo and *United 93* are both directed by filmmakers best known for their work in fiction, and Winterbottom and Greengrass shoot these reenactments in the same style which they use for their fiction films; unfixed, kinetic camera, apparently imperfect framing, spontaneous zooms and pans, and quickfire montage. Writing in 1985, Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery note that 'it has all but become a cliché in Hollywood filmmaking that when a director wants to convey a sense of spontaneity and immediacy in a particular scene, he or she uses a hand-held, restless, 'verité' style of shooting' (1985:pp.237-238). This visual technique, which originated in documentary, was appropriated by fiction in order to infer authenticity, and has now been reappropriated by documentary reenactment for its dramatic connotation. *The Road to Guantanamo* reenacts the events surrounding the capture of the 'Tipton Three' in Afghanistan in 2001, and their subsequent internment in Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay. Three British men - Asif, Ruhel and Shafiq - travelled to Pakistan in late September of 2001 to attend Asif's wedding, and subsequently decided to enter Afghanistan. While there, they were captured by Northern Alliance forces, handed over to the US and transported to Guantanamo Bay, where they were routinely tortured. *The Road to Guantanamo* tells this story through extended reenactments, intermingled with talking head interviews of the three men. *United 93* reenacts the events on the fourth aircraft hijacked on 9/11, in which the terrorists were apparently overpowered by the passengers, causing the plane to crash into a field. Every passenger on board was killed in the crash, and so *United 93* is told entirely in reenactment. The documentary creates a fully contained diegetic world, which, as in a dramatic film, is not ruptured (with the exception of one particular moment, which I will examine in due course).

Reenactments vary in their fidelity to real events. At one end of the spectrum would be *Downfall* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004), which takes the final days of the Third Reich as its inspiration, but takes considerable creative license in dramatizing these events, particularly Hitler's state of mind. In this type of reenactment, the historical world is simply the point of departure for the imagination of the filmmaker. In contrast, the reenactments of crimes in *Crimewatch* (BBC, 1984-) have an unimpeachable fidelity to known facts. I have selected *The Road to Guantanamo* and *United 93* due to the strong truth claims which their filmmakers profess. Winterbottom claims that *The Road to Guantanamo* is based on six hundred and fifty pages of transcripts compiled by Whitecross, who

spent one month interviewing the ‘Tipton Three’ (<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-road-to-guantanamo/articles/the-directors-take-on-the-road-to-guantanamo>). These serve as a script for the reenacted performance. Winterbottom claims that ‘[w]e’re trying to tell the story in their words, and trying to tell their version of what happened to them, just as a lawyer would tell their version of what happened to them. So we weren’t trying to independently check or cross-reference what they were saying’ (Ibid.). *United 93* has fewer documents on which to base its reenactment. The film is constructed from twenty-four phone calls by the passengers and crew and thirty minutes of cockpit voice recordings (<http://www.flight93.net>). Given the lack of source material, *United 93* must, by necessity, be more speculative in constructing its reenactment. A statement on the official website of *United 93* reads, ‘[a]s there is no perfect record of the hijacking’s exact details and hostage retaliation, Greengrass takes a careful hand and partially improvises the events with an ensemble cast of unknown actors who were given studies of their UNITED 93 counterparts’ (Ibid.). Both *The Road to Guantanamo* and *United 93* rely on the existential relationship between image and reality which has been at the core of my discussion. This relationship is much more complex in documentary reenactments.

Given that these documentaries reenact events in which real people were injured or killed, the filmmakers’ fidelity to known and verifiable facts has an ethical mandate. The filmmakers’ claims to authenticity, however, raise the key paradox posed by documentary reenactments: the film seeks to represent real people and real events, but the reenactment is a new object, created for and by the documentary. The representation is not of the real world. The representation is a staged fantasy sequence; a simulacrum of lost events and people. Reenactments relinquish the indexical bond between image and historical world. In this chapter, I will focus on the representational issues posed by the intervention of the extra body of the reenactment actor. *The Road to Guantanamo* and *United 93* represent the performances of actors, not the performances of the historical figures the documentaries purport to represent (by historical figure, I mean simply an individual situated in a past time). The historical figure is reembodied in the actor. The actor is a surrogate for the individual upon whom the reenactment is based.

Each actor in *The Road to Guantanamo* and *United 93* is a historiographer, using his or her body to select and process the ‘facts of the past’ (Edward Carr, 2001) into a narrative. The life of the historical figure is first refined into a restricted set of characteristics. Due to the surfeit of data in any historical account, the ‘historian and the agent of history choose, sever and carve them [the facts of the past] up, for a truly total history would confront them with chaos’ (Claude Levi Strauss, 1966:257). In making performance choices, the actor decides which emotions and attitudes s/he wishes to communicate (at the opportunity cost of other facts). Everything which the historical figure is – the congeries of discourses which form and define his/her identity – is reduced into the elements which actor and filmmaker deem germane to the documentary’s argument. This in itself is a creative treatment. *The Road to Guantanamo* sets out to represent the ‘Tipton Three’ as innocents abroad, caught up in an unfortunate web of circumstance. This is the only impression conveyed of the men in the reenactment. In *United 93*, the passengers are represented as suitably, and solely, terrified, the hijackers as febrile.

The actor’s performance is interpretative as well as selective. Having selected the facts which are deemed salient, the actor and filmmaker must now organise them into a narrative. The actor, along with the filmmaker, becomes an *auteur* of reality. The filmmakers and actors work together to present a specific and uniform impression of the historical figures reenacted by the film. The ideological imperatives and interpretations of the actors and filmmakers are essential in determining the manner in which the facts are presented. Hayden White argues that ‘no historical event is intrinsically tragic; it can only be conceived as such from a particular point of view or from within the context of a structured set of events of which it is an element enjoying a privileged place’ (1978:84). If the actor considers the story of his/her character to be tragic, s/he will compose a tragic performance. In so doing, the individual upon whom the performance is based will be represented as tragic. However, it is the decision of the actor to portray him/her in that way. For example, in *The Road to Guantanamo*, all US soldiers are performed as ornery and sadistic, whereas the ‘Tipton Three’ are played as callow and harmless. If these events were reenacted by actors and filmmakers more sympathetic to the US’s ‘War on Terror’, they would no doubt represent the subjects in an entirely divergent manner. Equally, in *United 93*, aircraft passengers are played as friendly and benevolent, while the hijackers are played

as menacing. An *Al-Qaeda*-sponsored reenactment would presumably look quite different. In each instance, the facts of the past upon which the reenactment is based would be the same. The actual performance of the individual reanimated by the documentary would also be the same. However, we can not see this performance. We can only see the interpretation of the actor.

Reenactments impose a theatrical frame on the representation. In this frame, semiotics becomes much more important (Keir Elam, 2002). Each object inside the theatrical frame, including the actor, is loaded with significance. Gregory Bateson argues that '[a]ny message which either explicitly or implicitly defines a frame *ipso facto* gives the receiver instructions or aids in his attempt to understand the messages included within the frame' (2004:128). We respond differently to a staged event than we do to a spontaneous occurrence. We are cognizant of the fact that the *mise-en-scène* in actuality footage is aleatory. In contrast, we are likely to decode the *mise-en-scène* of a reenactment in a manner commensurate to the cinematic image. For instance, if a snowstorm erupts during a sequence of actuality footage, the audience will no doubt read this as a chance vagary of the weather. A sudden snowstorm in a reenactment will be presumed to *mean something*; to have symbolic portent or a narrative function (e.g., *Alive*, Frank Marshall, 1993). This shift in cognition applies to the physical performance of the actor. Naremore argues that 'in most circumstances of everyday communication the interlocutor's gaze is directed toward an individual or a small group in the immediate vicinity; no special energy is required for the 'presentation of self', and considerable latitude is allowed for insignificant lapses, irrelevant movement, of glances away from the audience. In theatrical events, the voice and body are subject to a much more rigorous control' (pp.34-35). Fictional actors must be knowingly ostensive: eye movements, gestures, vocal inflections are all semiotic. Every gesture the actor makes has meaning. A misplaced hand, a mistimed blink, would alter the meaning of the performance. Every gesture, tic, eye movement and vocal inflection carries discrete meaning, and also compounds into a gestalt.

The actor's performance therefore overwhelms the reenactment. The body and performance of the actor has greater presence than the historical figure to whom it refers. The historical figure is a spectre, embodied in the dynamics and *gest* of another being. It is to the physical performance of the

actor which we respond, however. We see and feel through the performance of an actor, not with the historical figure. The actor's *gest* encodes the performance - and it is this *gest* which the audience decodes. We have no access to the gestures, vocal inflections or facial expressions of the personages *The Road to Guantanamo* and *United 93* claim to represent. Despite the two films' professed fidelity to the accounts of these personages, it is through the performance of their surrogate actors that we come to know these figures. The documentary represents the surrogate. It is the surrogate which is presented to as evidence of the events depicted. It is the surrogate which affects us. The historical figure's agency is therefore subsumed by the actor. The historical figure becomes an object: his/her existence is interpreted and supplanted by a new subject.

Rebecca Schneider's study of American Civil War reenactments reveals an alternative perspective on reenactment performance. Participants believe that the reiteration of gestures and poses is in fact a means of accessing the past, of making the past present (2011:pp.32-60). Schneider argues that '[i]t is as if some history reenactors position their bodies to access, consciously and deliberately, a fleshy or pulsing kind of trace they deem accessible in a pose, or gesture, or set of acts' (37). The past can be transmitted from body-to-body, in the form of restored behaviour (104). As I discussed in chapter one, the principle ethos of restored behaviour is that all acts are citational. That is, all behaviour is a reenactment. Schneider argues that '[a]n action repeated again and again, however, fractured or partial or incomplete, has a kind of staying power – persists through time – and even, in a sense, serves as a fleshy kind of 'document' of its own recurrence' (37). The synchronic moment which the reenactment depicts has disappeared, but the 'specter' of the historical figure can be reanimated by the actor. Schneider describes this as the 'live body enabling the specter to reappear across the surface of live encounter' (109). This is, I would argue, the guiding principle of documentary reenactment, particularly *United 93*. Every individual whom this reenactment represents is dead. The documentary reenacts the event in order to make us understand the passengers' experience, and to honour their apparent bravery in overpowering the hijackers. When Schneider uses the term 'specter', however, she reveals that the relationship between reenactment and historical world is distinct to the relationship between traditional documentary representation and the historical

world. The bond constructed between reenactment and historical world is not indexical. It is a bond based on absence/desire and fantasy.

Bill Nichols' essay 'Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject' (2004) explores this bond, relating it to documentary filmmaking's quest for authenticity. Nichols claims that the attempt to make the past present 'engenders an impossible task for the reenactment: to retrieve a lost object in its original form even as the very act of retrieval generates a new object and a new pleasure' (2008:74). Nichols argues that '[r]eenactments occupy a strange status in which it is crucial that they be recognized as a representation of a prior event while also signaling that they are not a representation of a contemporaneous event' (73). Reenactments in documentary can not make the evidentiary claims which other documentary images activate. Reenactments take us out of the realm of the material and into fantasy. A reenactment 'involves a pleasure associated with a past event that is transposed into a distinctly different, fantasmatic domain' (Nichols:76). The illusion they create activates the imaginary. Nichols claims that 'reenactments affect a temporal vivification in which past and present coexist in the impossible space of a fantasmatic. This form of coexistence revolves around a lost object and the signifiers that serve as resurrected ghosts that both haunt and endow the present with psychic intensity' (88). Nichols argues that the reenactment draws its fantasmatic power from the fact that it 'forfeits its indexical bond to the original event' (74). The very thing that makes reenactments affective divorces them from reality. Nichols claims that '[v]ivification is neither evidence nor explanation. It is, though, a form of interpretation, an inflection that resurrects the past to reanimate it with the force of desire' (88). Fantasy appeals to the unconscious. The unconscious is the domain of impulse and affect. It privileges emotional response over reason. Jean LaPlanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis argue that the 'world of fantasy seems to be located exclusively within the domain of opposition between subjective and objective, between an inner world, where satisfaction is obtained through illusion, and an external world, which gradually, through the medium of perception, asserts the supremacy of the reality principle' (1986:6). Reenactments dance along this boundary; activating our unconscious wish-fulfilment, while at the same time retaining a perceptual bond to the real, conscious world.

Performers in reenactments therefore become fantasy figures. As in fiction, we project into the image and identify with on-screen characters (Christian Metz, 1982; Stephen Heath, 1981). Valerie Walkerdine's account of viewing *Rocky II* (Sylvester Stallone, 1979) describes how she became helplessly involved in the eponymous character's struggles in the ring: 'I was Rocky – struggling, fighting, crying to get out' (1986:169). Walkerdine argues that the 'film engages me as a viewer at the level of fantasy because I can insert myself into, position myself with, the desires and pain woven into its images' (169). Walkerdine adds that '[w]atching *Rocky II*, to be effective, necessitates an already existent constitution of pains, of losses and desires for fulfillment and escape, inhabiting already a set of fantasy spaces inscribing us in the 'everyday life' of practices which produce us all' (171). It is with the reenactment actor that we identify, not the historical figure. The actor is the screen object. It is his/her performance which activates our imaginary.

Reenactments therefore construct a complex and challenging set of relations between representation and reality. Reenactments occupy a 'strange status', as Nichols puts it. *The Road to Guantanamo* and *United 93* stage recurrences of past events, from which a 'spectre' of the event may be preserved. The reenactment finds a new body for the social actor, so that we may remember him/her. The historical figure is the origin of the documentary representation, but this origin is transmuted through the body of an actor. In this process, I argue, the historical figure is overwhelmed by the body of the actor.

***The Road to Guantanamo* (Michael Winterbottom and Matt Whitecross, 2006)**

The Road to Guantanamo begins with actuality footage of George W. Bush and Tony Blair holding a post-9/11 press conference. Presumably referring to the inmates of Guantanamo Bay, Bush declares that 'The only thing I know for certain is that these are bad people'. We then cut to a reenactment of a young man brushing his teeth and packing his bag for a trip. This cuts to a talking head, identified as Asif, who describes the process of packing for a trip to Pakistan, where he is to be married. Implicit in

this cut is that the young man is enacting Asif's testimony. He is 'Asif', the diegetic character who denotes Asif, the historical figure. While Asif provides commentary, 'Asif' acts it out. Two bodies tell one story; one in exposition, one in enactment. The body of the actor and the body of the interviewee both represent the same individual, at different times and in different places. This produces a dual, dialectical diegesis. We see the same event from two times and in two forms. However, the reenactments and the interviews are different objects, and different performances. The reenactments and the interviews operate on two levels. The talking heads have the authority of eyewitness testimony (although we may judge the sincerity or cynicism of the attendant presentation of self, the film chooses not to scrutinise these performances at all). They appeal to our reason. Testimony requires us to construct a visual and aural image ourselves. The reenactments are fantasy. They appeal to our imaginary. The reenactment creates a picture for us. The historical figure has a presence in the film, but the reenactments are more vivid and affective (Nichols, 2008). The performance of the actor has greater impact, it transmits more information than a talking head. Asif, like the other talking heads in the film, is shot sitting down, in close-up. His on-screen performance, therefore, is limited in the information it can communicate. The reenactment performances include gestures and greater voice modulation. The actor's bodies are mobile and dynamic.

'Asif' goes through the minutiae of preparing for his trip and saying goodbye to his family. This is intercut with identical scenes of two other men packing for a trip. Their correlate talking heads identify them as 'Ruhel' and 'Shafiq', who will accompany 'Asif'. They all meet up, shake hands and talk excitedly. As is the case in most of the reenactments, we can not hear what they are saying; the film does not consider it salient. Most spoken expository information in *The Road to Guantanamo* is reserved for the talking heads. The banal and benign nature of this sequence stands in ironic counterpoint to Bush's declaration about 'bad people'. Winterbottom claims that 'we wanted to show the gap between what you thought people would be like in Guantanamo and the reality of meeting them' (Ibid.). Most spectators will know that these characters are destined for Guantanamo Bay, and so we know that Bush is talking about these men. The reenactment suggests to us that they have been misidentified.

Throughout this sequence, dramatic music plays in the background, which builds suspense, informing us what we probably already know; that this is a far more portentous affair than the performance of the actors makes out. This scene has a narrative function. It establishes the world of the men before their ordeal at Guantanamo Bay and sets out the characters as carefree and sanguine. The characters subsequently undergo a ‘transformation’ (Tzvetan Todorov, 1975) when their ordeal in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay begins. As in any fiction film, the reenactment establishes an initial equilibrium, which will be disturbed by narrative events. The reenactment performances in *The Road to Guantanamo* have a dual purpose: to be the men’s ‘lawyer’, and to progress the narrative. As in fiction, characters in reenactments are agents of the plot, defined ‘according to a participation in a sphere of actions’ (Roland Barthes, 1977:107). The performances are controlled so as to serve this function. The actors perform the innocence of the three men at this moment, serving their function to the narrative. It may be extremely difficult, or dishonest, for the talking heads in the present to attempt to recreate this impression. Their knowledge of what happens inflects their present performance. As such, the talking heads can not build suspense as effectively as the reenactment actors. The talking heads have already undergone the ordeal; they have completed the narrative trajectory of this dramatization. The reenactment allows us to revisit the past without the burden of experience; it recreates a world which no longer exists. The talking heads allow us to revisit the past with the benefit of hindsight.

The reenactment then travels to Pakistan, where it is shot on location. This provides the film with affective verisimilitude. We follow the characters as they walk through the teeming airport, and then as they travel through the townships on a bus. In this sequence, the talking heads take it in turns to provide exposition about their journey and their personal impressions of Pakistan. Throughout the film, the primacy of visual and aural exposition oscillates. At times, most of the information is provided by the reenactment, with voice-over and talking heads providing occasional detail. At other times, the reenactment simply illustrates what the men are saying, adding dimensions to their account. This journey is abruptly cut with actuality footage of Islamic demonstrations in Karachi from the time. We then cut back to the characters entering a tranquil mosque and praying serenely. This again presents a disparity between what has been portrayed to us by the media and the actual experience of

the men. In contrast to the febrile climate, the characters do typical tourist things; shopping, eating, visiting a funfair. As is the case in every scene leading up until their capture, the performance of the actors conveys a single, precise impression. There is little texture or nuance to the performances. The impression created by the performances is of four young men excited in a new and exotic country. They chat to one another, point out curiosities, smile and laugh. The camera does not dwell on any face long enough to allow us to examine any emotional complexity. Each shot is too short for us to pick out much detail from their gestures. There is no drama between the characters. The film is reducing and refining a life into a single, salient message. In being so reductive, the representation is in fact highly stylized. To reduce a life into a single, uniform impression is a very creative treatment.

Having established the political turmoil surrounding the characters, in the following sequence they have dinner and discuss entering Afghanistan. Asif reveals that their Imam enjoined them to help the Afghan people, while he was keen to discover what Afghanistan was ‘really like’. The characters sit and discuss the matter, and decide, rather blithely, to go. The last word on the discussion goes to ‘Shafiq’, who extols the largeness of naan bread in Afghanistan. After the decision is reached, the men become immersed in the minutiae of dining out; ordering food, sharing it out, laughing and joking. The glibness of this scene makes the men appear startlingly naïve in retrospect. There is no talk of possible consequences, little exposition of their motivation and no indication of fear or trepidation. The juxtaposition created by the film - where the characters are carefree and happy, in opposition to the political atmosphere - seems laboured here. The performance of the actors still has a single goal at this point; to portray only excitement and innocence, which will stand in clear counterpoint to their subsequent trauma. This scene foregrounds the intentional reductiveness of the performances. Can it really be believed that three middle-class boys from England decided to enter a war zone, under siege from the world’s most powerful nations, as off-handedly as is represented here? I would posit this scene as illustrative of the way in which reenactments strategically select certain facts of the past and discard others for rhetorical and narrative purposes. Asif, Shafiq and Ruhel are all represented as breathtakingly guileless by their surrogates in this scene.

After entering Afghanistan in the midst of the bombing, 'Asif', 'Shafiq' and 'Ruhel' eventually become pinned down in Kunduz. At this point, the reenactment takes a more dramatic turn. Until now, the characters have been portrayed as extrinsic and detached to the war. They are now involved in it. Shafiq tersely sets the dramatic tension: 'Once we were in Kunduz, we were trapped'. Kunduz is subsequently overrun by the Northern Alliance. The framing of the film depicts the terror and panic of this scene. People run here and there, jumping onto trucks. Our characters become lost in the crowd. The camera loses its privileged attachment to them. This mirrors the aesthetic of actuality footage in such scenes, where the cameraman is also running for his or her life. The characters escape on trucks, but are then hit by a bombing raid. The blasts are recreated by the film, with intermittent close-ups on the characters' faces to show their fear. This sequence is depicted with little intervention from the talking heads. Apparently, testimony can not provide sufficient sensory information for this scene. The reenactments allow the audience to see and hear the explosions, the fleeing and fallen bodies, the jostling, the screams and the shouts. The viscosity of the reenactments comes to the fore in the following scenes.

The characters are subsequently captured by Northern Alliance fighters. Shafiq describes the terror and confusion he felt, convinced that they were to be executed. The reenactment here shows only basic details, as the characters are rounded up, searched and menaced at gunpoint. Once more, we see little of the actor's reactions, of their feelings and emotions. We only see fleeting glimpses of tense faces and hear the minatory yells of the soldiers. The scene is interspersed with brief comments by Asif and Shafiq in talking head, whose testimony adds some texture and context to the frenetic action of the reenactment. The status of the historical figures fluctuates during these scenes. The film asks us to engage with two bodies, but in order to tell the same story. The three men who suffered this ordeal, whose story we are being told, appear and disappear. However, the immediacy and drama of the reenactments overpowers the talking heads. The object to which we ascribe the terror is the object having terror enacted upon it. The actors are being bound and menaced. The actors' faces are contorted into masks of fear. In contrast, the talking heads provide sober exposition.

The characters are then taken to a US prison camp in Pakistan. Asif states, 'I thought, it's alright now – nothing's going to happen, but I was wrong'. Again, there is little exposition from the talking heads in this extended sequence; sovereignty transfers to the actors. In this scene, the bodies of the actors take on even more prominent and essential roles. The characters are hooded and manhandled by the US soldiers, who are extremely brutal. The soldiers genuinely shove and drag the other actors around. This treatment continues after the characters are transferred to Guantanamo Bay. Vocal accounts can not communicate this roughhousing as effectively. When we see a face hit the dirt, we can empathise with how that might feel. The actor's bodies have the horror and brutality played out upon them. The style of the reenactments and the physicality of these scenes attempt to simulate the brutality. However, this scene is only playacting. Gregory Bateson's essay on play in the animal kingdom makes a distinction between a playful nip and a real bite (2004:122). Even though a bite and a nip are the same action, where the bite denotes aggression, the nip denotes play. The physicality of these scenes has the same register. The sight of bodies being moved by the force of another hand and the sounds of bodies landing in the dirt, accompanied by an eddy of disturbed dust, is visceral. Bill Nichols argues that representations of violence 'retain the power to produce visceral effect'; they produce an 'indexical whammy' (1994:pp.18-19). The genuine physicality enacted upon the actor's bodies appears to aim for this effect. However, we know that the actors are not actually in any danger, or suffering genuine physical trauma. We know that the soldiers can not make good on their many threats.

Although the reenactments in *The Road to Guantanamo* are constructed to look real and immediate, they lose the peril and uncertainty contained in any spontaneous occurrence. We already know the results, to one degree or another. The dramatic stakes are not as high. In real life the human body is in constant danger, whereas the reenacted body is in none. Reenactments revisit the past, but protected from its uncertainties and vicissitudes. The reenactments can not convey the genuine suffering of the three men in this ordeal. When people are brutalised for real, flesh bruises and bones break. Reenactments are staged to prevent this from happening to the actors (in some cases, stuntmen may be used in place of the actor, producing a surrogate for the surrogate). The pain and terror of

torture can not be recreated. There is therefore an affective deficit here. The reenactment can not communicate what it attempts to.

After the characters are transported to Guantanamo Bay, there are a number of interrogation sequences. In these scenes, the physicality of the actors has symbolic significance. ‘Asif’, ‘Shafiq’ and ‘Ruhel’ are all young and skinny. They barely more than adolescents, whereas the US soldiers are much older and larger. Their movements are more decisive, their voices are deeper and louder. In addition, their uniforms confer authority and institutional gravity which the character’s tattered rags do not. Initially, the characters are utterly dominated by the soldiers. Their voices are high-pitched as they plead their innocence and confusion. ‘Asif’ and ‘Ruhel’ both exhibit brief gestures of defiance. However, they sound less formidable and impressive than the soldiers, like petulant adolescents feebly standing up to authority. They are less decisive in their movements than the soldiers and occasionally they stutter. This clear contrast once more has a narrative function. It perpetuates the film’s argument that the men are harmless, and US soldiers are bullies. Again, the performance of the actors maintains the coherence of the film’s message.

Gradually, however, the characters become more self-righteous and assertive. The actors portray this by sitting upright and speaking more clearly and forcefully. ‘Asif’ fiercely denies being a jihadi to one interrogator. However, when asked why they were in Afghanistan, he states, ‘I can’t prove anything and you’re not going to believe me, so I’m not going to say anything else’. This obtuse response is not elucidated or exculpated by any talking head. The repeated refusal to inform us why the men entered Afghanistan in the midst of a war is the most frustrating and craven element of *The Road to Guantanamo*. Winterbottom’s insistence that the filmmakers’ role was simply to be the men’s lawyer prevents us from discerning any information which would compromise or incriminate the men. The performances of the characters reveal nothing which discredits or contradicts the talking heads. It may of course be the case that their sortie to Afghanistan was entirely innocent, but the evasiveness of the film, an evasiveness not exhibited in any other area, is telling. The reenactments attempt to represent the truth of the men’s experience; the truth of life at Camp X-Ray; the truth of the US’s treatment of prisoners of the ‘War on Terror’. In this one area, however, Winterbottom refuses to

provide primary or secondary evidence. The reenactment, therefore, for all of its commitment to verisimilitude, is limited in the information which it is prepared to reveal.

***United 93* (Paul Greengrass, 2006)**

In *The Road to Guantanamo*, the historical figures upon whom the reenactment is based have a presence in the documentary. The testimony of Asif, Shafiq and Ruhel, and the six hundred pages of transcripts compiled by Whitecross, gives the men some ownership over their correlate diegetic characters. Where *The Road to Guantanamo* sets out to maintain strong fidelity between document and reenactment, *United 93* must by necessity be more speculative. The actors who play the passengers of Flight 93 have no transcripts on which to base their performance. They are unable to meet with the individuals they play, as the actors in *The Road to Guantanamo* did. We have no record of how the passengers acted and reacted. All we have is an actor's suggestion of how they *may* have acted and reacted. The mute and absent have been given a voice and a body, but it is not their own. The official website of *United 93* contains a statement which reads, 'The film attempts to understand the abject fear and courageous decisions of those who – over the course of the course of just 90 minutes – transformed from a random assembly of disconnected strangers into bonded allies who confronted an unthinkable situation' (<http://www.flight93.net>). *United 93* seeks to establish a bond between the reenactment and the real people, which, I argue, is made unsustainable by the level of speculation and interpretation required by the actors.

Despite the multitude of images we have from 9/11, from news coverage to the plethora of documentaries made since, there is little footage from behind the scenes, as it were. Director Paul Greengrass provides his mission statement; '[m]ade with the full support of the families of those on board, UNITED 93 will track in real time the dramatic story of what happened inside the aircraft as well as on the ground, as passengers, crew, Civilian Air Traffic Controllers and Military Command Centres struggle to make sense of an unimagined and unimaginable crisis' (<http://www.flight93.net>).

United 93 animates this past event as a means to honour and valorise the passengers, the air traffic controllers and military personnel who attempted to take control of the events of 9/11. The film creates an opportunity for us to celebrate acts of heroic defiance against the destruction and depredation inflicted on the US that day. The images of 9/11 which are in circulation today depict the US as helpless and passive; ambushed and injured before they could respond. In all actuality footage which we have, the twin towers stand helplessly while two aircraft fly out of the clear blue sky and destroy them. The collapse of these twin edifices of US iconography is always accompanied by scenes of hysterical bystanders, fleeing in terror. The reenactment in *United 93* sets out to counter these images and shows people attempting, fiercely and courageously, to seize control of the crisis. This is the narrative purpose of the reenactment.

In attempting to remember the passengers of Flight 93, Greengrass does not acknowledge the fact that the film creates a new object. It is this object which involves us. It is with these diegetic characters that we sympathise and onto whom we project. It is through their movements and expressions that we enter this crisis. The real passengers of the flight are mute and invisible. They are motionless. The evidence upon which the reenactment is based remains historical document. *United 93* creates a new document in its place and I argue that the presence and immediacy of the new document supersedes the past document. As the filmmakers admit, the evidence available for this reenactment is also limited. Where there is no evidence, the reenactment in *United 93* is the only document we have.

There are five key settings in *United 93* – the Air Traffic Control centres in Virginia, New York and Cleveland; the Military Command Control Center; and the aircraft itself. In each scene, a small cast of characters directs the action. Our main protagonist is Ben, the director of ATC in Virginia (this actor bears a strong physical resemblance to Ben Sliney, the individual for whom he is a surrogate). The scenes here establish the camaraderie and impressive professionalism of Ben and his team. The staff are friendly and congenial, while their attention to detail and *sangfroid* is absolute. The air traffic controllers who discover each hijack in turn also have significant roles, as their revelations cue up important plot transformations. Their increasing anxiety and confusion indexes the

increasing tension in the narrative. Inside the plane, our attention is directed to the four hijackers and two passengers who eventually lead the revolt against the terrorists. As the drama unfolds, we become more familiar with these characters. It is through their performances that we experience and apprehend the drama of the events. With no talking heads for exposition, all information is communicated by the actors. Therefore, their role as historians is prominent. The story is told entirely through their bodies.

United 93 begins in a hotel room, with a Middle Eastern man reading aloud from a Koran. As we watch the man incanting his prayer, the camera is shaky and the framing imperfect. The shot is partially obscured by a door frame and at one point an unidentified figure passes in front of the lens, obscuring our view. The camera appears to have discovered this scene, rather than the scene been constructed for the camera. This aesthetic confuses documentary and fiction in their register. Fiction film usually exploits the fact that it is staged in order to make the image perfect. The less aware of the apparatus the spectator is, the more involved s/he can become (Christian Metz; Stephen Heath; Valerie Walkerdine). In contrast, conventional ‘fly-on-the-wall’ documentary aesthetics are less polished, but they are an *a priori* guarantor of spontaneity. This frame is reflexive, reminding us that it is a frame. It is therefore difficult to identify with this character. I read this as an indication that the director does not wish us to identify with this character. Eventually, the other figure reenters the frame and utters, ‘It’s time’. This scene functions as a dramatic prologue. It activates what we already know about the events of 9/11 in order to build suspense. The actor is impassive and inexpressive, but by simply speaking Arabic, and through his rote examination of the Koran, he is able to convey immanent, and imminent, threat to the audience. This is followed by a sequence of four characters going through a pre-martyrdom ritual; shaving and praying, all of which glimpsed from behind, through, and obscured by, a door frame, as though the characters are being spied upon. Again, the film is constructing a barrier between us and these characters.

As the men arrive at Newark airport, the scene resembles *The Road to Guantanamo*, with quick cutting depicting a montage of faces in close-up and the cacophonous sounds of the airport – loudspeaker, chattering, planes taking off. One face is selected from the crowd, and then abandoned.

One voice separates itself from the roar, can be heard briefly, and then disappears. This creates a visual and aural mosaic of the scene. Cut into the mosaic of faces are those of the Middle Eastern characters we have been following. None of the characters say anything. They merely look tense, particularly the character who will later pilot the hijacked aircraft. Their eyes are wide and staring. They scan the environment feverishly, occasionally looking over their shoulders. They walk very fast through the crowd. The camera picks out perspiration on their brows. As in *The Road to Guantanamo*, the performances convey a very limited and focused impression.

United 93 is reluctant to disclose much personal information about the hijackers. There is no dialogue between these characters. Their names are not provided. The performances reveal nothing of their motivations or ideology. The characters convey nothing but apparent tension throughout the reenactment. Before the hijack, they look anxious; after the hijack, even more so. However, no historical document exists to indicate that the hijackers did in fact appear tense to onlookers. This is a *post hoc* speculation, based on how the actors imagine a terrorist may behave in such circumstances and how the filmmakers wish the terrorists to be portrayed. There are ideological and theological assumptions being made here. A suicide-jihadist who believed himself bound for Paradise may in fact not appear tense at all. If we apply Richard Schechner's 'me...not me...not not me' triangulation once more, we see that the actor who plays a historical figure injects his or her own self into the role. His/her consciousness and physicality becomes one with the role and defines it. In the performance, the 'me' (actor) and the 'not me' (historical figure) are relinquished and replaced by the 'not not me' (actor playing the historical figure). The self of the actor is part of the performance. Naturalistic acting techniques encourage the actor to relate the part to his/her own life experience (Konstantin Stanislavsky, 1970:pp.485-495; Lee Strasberg, 1970:pp.623-629). The actor can only use his own frame of reference to construct his performance. In this reenactment, the actors playing the terrorists are exploring a frame of reference with which they almost certainly have no familiarity. How many individuals can call upon feelings and emotions concomitant in magnitude to an aircraft hijack and suicide mission? The actors impose a particular interpretation on this event, and apply it to the individuals upon whom the reenactment is based. The 'spectre' of the historical figure is filtered through the consciousness of another subject who may have little or no apprehension of this spectre.

This makes it extremely difficult to sustain any claim to authenticity in this reenactment. The performances are pure speculation.

The first indication of the calamitous events to follow is in the Air Traffic Control Centre in Virginia, when a controller is unable to make contact with one plane. The lone controller tries again and again to make radio contact. As his confusion and alarm increases, so too does our own. After it has been established that the hijackings have taken place, we leave the pre-9/11 world and are given a vision of the initial reactions of the first people to inhabit a post-9/11 world. The controllers work frantically, darting here and there. Their voices rise in volume and pitch. They talk more quickly and over one another. The presumed anxiety at the fulcrum of this momentous historical event is represented by these performances. No personal data about the actual historical figures is disclosed. Most are not even identified by name. All of the professionals are shown being tested by the unfolding events, but maintaining their composure. These reenactments typify the people who do these jobs. Each individual demonstrates the same competence and aptitude. No individual is particularly distinctive. There are no histrionics. A real life has been reduced to a role in a crisis. As in *The Road to Guantanamo*, these characters are agents of the plot. Their historical agency has been subsumed by their function to the narrative.

United 93 uses actuality footage of the two planes striking the World Trade Centre. These sequences are displayed on diegetic screens in the Air Traffic Control Centre. When the second plane hits, however, the actuality footage fills our screen. It is an event of such magnitude that it ruptures the reenactment; it exceeds it. After the plane hits, the actors convey the shock of the moment. All talking and movement stops. We can hear only gasps and muffled screams and curses. These reactions are coterminous with the reactions of witnesses represented in news footage, and in subsequent documentaries, such as *9/11* (James Hanlon, Rob Klug, Gédéon Naudet and Jules Naudet, 2002) and *The Falling Man* (Henry Singer, 2006). In this moment, we can refer the reenactment performance to historical document. However, this document is not of the actual people being represented by *United 93*. The agency and individuality of the historical figures has been removed. A typified reaction has been ascribed to them.

Back on Flight 93, the suspense builds slowly. As the aircraft prepares for take-off, the tense faces of the Middle Eastern men are juxtaposed to the relaxed faces of the other passengers, who chat in low voices, eat and sleep. Two male passengers are privileged by the frame, appearing in shot several times. While most passengers are silent or inaudible, we are able to hear these men speak to the cabin crew, on their phones, and to each other. On the aircraft, every character is shown in close-up. No doubt this is partly due to spatial constraints. With their movements necessarily limited by the size of the cabin, the majority of the performances are played out on the actors' faces. When the hijackers take over the aircraft, there is a frenetic burst of action. The camera seems caught up in it, failing to effectively reveal what is happening to us. A cacophony of screams fills the soundtrack, punctuated by the febrile barks of the hijackers. Terrified faces can be briefly glimpsed as the camera twirls around the cabin. At this point, all performances are essentially identical: they communicate an overwhelming impression of fear. In this scene, it is with these specific faces which we identify, not the historical figures they purport to represent. The fear and pain is etched on the faces of the actors. After the film is over, when we recall the horror of the depiction, we do not remember the horror of the actual historical figures, because we did not see that. We do not know the extent of each individual's horror. We did not see the signals which the historical figures gave and gave off at this moment. Instead, we have only seen the face of the actor, and it is this which we recall.

The hijackers appear frightened and frenetic as they menace the passengers. They shout at one another in Arabic. That no translation of these ululations is provided tells us that the reenactment is to be seen from the perspective of the passengers. We receive no privileged information regarding what the characters are saying, nor about their plans. After the hijack, the terrorist who pilots the aircraft assumes the lead role. His anxiety now appears to be verging on hysteria. He perspires freely, sits extremely tense at the controls, his hands tremble and he snaps at his fellow hijackers. This performance is cogent and coherent. It is communicating a specific message. Again, the actor playing this role takes creative liberties in assuming how the hijacker felt and behaved at this moment. The real hijackers may not have appeared as manic as the actors portray them (a voice recording of the real hijacker which is played in *United 93* suggests that he was quite composed at that moment).

After the passengers discover that other aircraft have been hijacked and crashed, it becomes clear that the same fate awaits the passengers of Flight 93. The two male passengers who have monopolised much of the camera's attention then discuss overpowering the hijackers. The courage and resolve which *United 93* sets out to honour is concentrated on these two characters. The other thirty-eight passengers represented by the reenactment are thus rendered virtually inconsequential by the narrative. Their lives have been reduced to a briefly glimpsed expression of terror, a panicked wail, a body curled into the foetal position in a footwell. This is perhaps unfair on these passengers, who may have contributed far more to events, and who may have appeared more phlegmatic than their surrogates opt to portray them. Eventually the two men lead a group into storming the cockpit. One group of passengers swarm two of the hijackers, beating them savagely, and the others begin battering at the cockpit door. The kinetic camera picks up only flailing limbs. It is caught up and overwhelmed by this burst of violent activity. We hear savage war cries as the passengers ram the dinner cart against the cockpit door, while the hijackers shout in alarm. The panic and fear demonstrated by the hijackers here gives us vicarious pleasure, but were the real hijackers frightened and disordered? The film ends with the passengers gaining entry to the cockpit, and the pilot desperately wrestling with the controls of the aircraft as it descends into a tailspin. As the screen cuts to black just before the aircraft hits the ground, the final impression we are left with is the panic of the hijackers as they realise that the hijack has gone awry, and the fierce zeal of the passengers as they fight the terrorists.

The Road to Guantanamo and *United 93* take historical figures as their source material and replace them with the body of an actor. The performer begins by selecting and reducing the life of a real person into a limited set of traits and emotions, with a clear narrative function. The affective and fantasmatic power which reenactments have requires us to be involved in the illusion they create. The spectre of the historical figure, of his/her experience and placement in real events, is preserved by his/her surrogate in the reanimation of those events. However, we interact and identify with the performer, not the historical figure. The reenactment performer engulfs the subject of the reenactment.

The historical figure becomes an object. We apprehend the event through the performer's *gest*. The reenactment performer's body places a barrier between the document and the individual it purports to represent.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I sought to recalibrate the orientation of analysis on documentary. The ‘creative treatment’ has been extensively evaluated and reevaluated. From John Grierson’s postulation of the ‘creative treatment of actuality’ (Forsyth Hardy, 1979:11), to John Corner’s claim that we have entered a ‘postdocumentary’ age (2002), documentary writing has fixated on the nature of documentary’s ambition and ability to represent the real. Bill Nichols’ seminal *Representing Reality* establishes a philosophical framework for documentary and undertakes a diligent and detailed analysis of the representational practices and processes used by documentary filmmakers in their treatment of the ‘thing’ called reality (1991). Nichols argues that documentary ‘requires awareness of an antecedent reality before it can come into being as a specific form’ (pp.231-232). Stella Bruzzi’s more contemporary analysis of documentary fundamentals argues that we do better to define documentary, not as a treatment of actuality, but as an encounter with actuality (2006). Bruzzi claims that documentary can not capture pre-existing truths, but rather, the truth in documentary ‘only comes into being at the moment of filming’ (10). While I agree with this insight, Bruzzi still posits the same dyad between the text on one hand, and the reality with which it interacts on the other hand.

Collections of writing documentary, such as *Documenting the Documentary* (Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski, 1998) and *New Challenges for Documentary* (Alan Rosenthal and John Corner, 2005) approach the subject by examining individual texts. This approach is helpful in addressing the eclectic landscape of documentary filmmaking, where individual filmmakers of individual texts interact with their source material in different ways, and activate different levels of truth claim. A running theme in each of these studies, however - along with the more general discussions undertaken by Nichols and Bruzzi, along with Brian Winston (1995) and Corner (1996) - is the same focus on the creative treatment.

In focusing on the *representation*, documentary writing has neglected the *represented*. It was the goal of this thesis to redress this balance. Documentary writing takes the documentary object as its

genesis, and extrapolates from this object to the text, examining the meanings and inflections picked up by the representation along the way. This thesis took the same object as its genesis, but extrapolated in the other direction, exploring the processes and practices from which the object is formed.

Actuality is not to be taken for granted. Reality is not a given. What we perceive by as reality is every bit as discursive, contingent and complex as any creative treatment. In this thesis, I disseminated one element of the actuality in documentary. The people who appear in documentaries are not simple objects. They are subjects. Human beings are themselves socially constructed and they have agency which allows them to control, to an extent, the manner in which they are represented and the manner in which they represent others. Many documentaries set out to ‘get to know the real’ person. The theories of Richard Schechner (1985; 2002), Judith Butler (1995; 1999), Erving Goffman (1959) et al. refute the notion of a real self, certainly a real self which could be definitively ascertained and reproduced. Acting naturally is an act, but it is not natural. The performances we give in everyday life are composed of citations and reiterations of acts, characteristics and ‘strips of behaviour’, which we did not encode. A representation of a human being is a representation of much more than a single body. People are vehicles for congeries of discourses and signifying practices which are developed over time, transmitted from body to body, circulated through a cultural matrix, picking up inflections, shedding them, but constantly moving. The performances we give are also composed of intentionally modified behaviour, disguised as natural behaviour, and of strategic reactions to the actions of others.

The texts which I studied are illustrative of what I consider to be the most obvious and important intersections between performance and documentary. I set out to elucidate the claims made by the texts on the strength of the performances of their subjects, and the pressure put on these claims by theories of performance. I selected performativity, the presentation of self, interaction and reenactment performance because they form an intrinsic part of documentary discourse. These modes of performance appear right across the documentary genre and, I argue, must be considered in any analysis of the meanings generated by the text. In chapter one, I argued that performance is *sine qua*

non to the enactment of our everyday identity and conduct. As Schechner claims, '[p]erformativity is everywhere – in daily behaviour, in the professions, on the internet and media, in the arts, and in language' (2002:110). In chapter two, I showed that the self which we present to others is a managed, dramaturgical product. While we do not encode 'strips of behaviour' ourselves, we are able to choose from amongst a given batch, with the intention of producing a specific impression of ourselves. As self-serving and calculating beings, it is quite natural that we all avail ourselves of this opportunity to portray ourselves favourably. Interactive performance between filmmaker and subject is reactive and dialectical. The meanings generated in this type of performance arise from the game of information control between filmmaker and subject. In this encounter, issues of power and agency are essential. Who has power does not only control the representation, s/he also controls the reality represented. In chapter four, I examined the relationship between the performance of an actor and the historical figure s/he attempts to reanimate. In reenactments, the performer as surrogate provides the meanings which we are intended to ascribe to the absent historical figure. The spectre of the historical figure is subsumed by the performance of his/her surrogate.

When a documentary represents a human being, it is representing a performance. My argument was grounded on the assumption that documentary has not (yet) collapsed into an irreconcilable congeries of disparate texts. Documentary filmmakers do attempt to represent the real and there is a reason they do this. Corner argues that the enduring and defining characteristic of documentary 'is the claim, made in different ways throughout the history of documentary work, that a special relationship to the real is being achieved (indexical, evidential, revelatory) and, on the basis of this relationship, that 'truths' are being communicated' (1996:10). The fact that the object in documentary is 'taken' from the real world gives the text gravitas and a relevance to our lives. As documentary continues to evolve, the existential bond between image and object will no doubt be placed under greater and greater strain. However, meanings are generated in the encounter between film and actuality. We can only evaluate or appreciate these meanings with an analysis of what actuality is. While I argue that the truth claim persists, this thesis was committed to scrutinising the object to which the documentary lays claim. The truth claim can only be defended if it is clarified.

Given that I was syncretizing two substantial and diverse disciplines, my analysis was necessarily broad. My aim was to select what I consider to be the most important areas of performance in documentary, and to offer a general outline on how these modes of performance fall within the ambit of documentary theory and practice. I can envisage further research in a number of areas. As I took a theoretical approach, I did not study historical developments and variations in documentary performance. Were I to expand on this topic, this would be my first area of inquiry. Equally, I believe it would be instructive to examine performance and its treatment across the repertoire of specific filmmakers. Errol Morris' work would be extremely compelling in this regard. Morris seems to be fascinated by his subjects and their performances. In films such as *Gates of Heaven* (1978) and *Mr Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred Leuchter* (1999), Morris focuses on his subjects' idiosyncrasies and the minutiae of character detail. In contrast, in *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) and *Fog of War* (2007), the subjects' performances are much more grave and focused. It would be interesting to study how a filmmaker like Morris uses his subjects across his *oeuvre*, examining the meanings created, the arguments made and his treatment of their performances.

I began this thesis by noting that 'putting on a performance' is generally perceived as a specific, intentional act which obstructs documentary in its goal to reveal the 'real' person. I have set out to elucidate the ways in which we are all, always and everywhere, putting on a performance. The vagaries of performance make the truth claim more complex and more contingent than the quest to 'represent reality' implies, but I argue that they do not abrogate documentary's truth claim. This thesis was an attempt to explicate the nature of the claim, focusing on an area which is often overlooked.

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